CHAUCER

NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Age of Chaucer

To realise the import of Chaucerian literature in the age and society in which it was composed, it is necessary to understand the *social context* of the age. Geoffrey Chaucer was the most representative poet who was so much the greatest figure of the Middle Ages that he has thrown all his other contemporaries into the shade. Chaucer symbolizes the characterisic spirit and the ideals of this age as none of his fellow-writers do "standing in much the same relation to the life of his time as Pope does to the earlier phases of the eighteenth century and Tennyson to the Victorian era."[1] The works of Pope and Tennyson bear the impress of those impersonal forces of their respective ages which "combined to create the *Zeitgeist* or *Time-Spirit* of the age of Anne and the Victorian era."[2] It is true that no other English poet has preserved for us so much of the life, spirit, ideals and sentiments of the Middle Ages than Chaucer.

But, like Dante, Chaucer was a kind of bridge between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He is the "Evening Star, of the Medieval day and the Morning Star of the Renaissance." Chaucer is thus "the central figure of that earlier Renaissance which could not maintain itself in England, because the time was not yet ripe."[3] Man's discovery of himself as an object of contemplation is the new spirit of Renaissance expressing itself in the sense of dignity of the human personality, the humanist's

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1. Rickett : A History of English Literature, p. 66.
2. Hudson ; An Introduction to the Study of Literature, p. 34.
3. Rutherford ; Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 61.

interest in the study of classical antiquity, the discovery of the external universe and the cultivation of the sense of beauty. All these modern tendencies also find expression in Chaucer's poetry, which while, still reflecting the pomp and pageantry of the Middle Ages and painting the picture of medieval England, caught the light of the New Learning, for which Chaucer may be said to be heralding the dawn of the Modern Age. Chaucer was like a lone peak, rising sheer from the centre of a high table land and catching the first streaks of the dawn, though it is still many hours before the full break of day. The romantic literature of the medieval period was but a preparation for Chaucer's singular literary achievements in humanism and realism of the New Learning which distinguish Chaucer from medieval writers. In his later works Chaucer discarded the old English traditions altogether, expressed in no uncertain terms his supreme contempt for miracle plays and romances, disregarded even the work of his earlier period when he was under French influence and deliberately made a fresh beginning in modern English poetry. So "if we call him the father of modern poetry, we shall be speaking the literal truth."[1]

The contrast between the medieval mind with its gaze fixed primarily on the spiritual and the abstract and the Renaissance attitude with its stress on the sensuous and the concrete is characteristic of the two standpoints. The former is definitely an unprogressive spirit, marked by monotony, stagnation of ideal, absence of individual initiative, and devotion to forms rather than to the substance of life. All the time when Chaucer was under the domination of medievalism, during his 'French and Italian periods', he was working for independence and, as he went on, "his original genius strengthened and took more and more of real life into his view and when he finally emerged into his 'English period' he had cast off his foreign masters

1. Chamber's Cyclopedia of English Literature, Vol. I, p. 82.

and struck out absolutely for himself."[1]

Unlike other epochs of English literary history named after their representative writers, the age of Chaucer covers a period which is neither more nor less than his own life-time of sixty years from 1340 to 1400, essentially an age of unrest, transition—of glaring social contrasts and rapid political changes. A great representative writer is not an isolated product, even though he rises head and shoulders above his contemporaries. He has his affiliations with the past and the present—with the social *milieu*. But if we say with Taine[2] that Chaucer was little more than a mere sample of his race and the epoch in which he was born, we shall be neglecting the factor of the personality of Chaucer and his originating genius. In fact "it is the minor men of an age in whose work the general spirit of that age is most faithfully reflected. The strong man (the genius) is most himself when he is most independent of current influences."[3] So with the man of genius, like Chaucer, we must make allowance for the exceptional personal quality, which combines in him with the common characteristics of the social context some unique gift of his own ; otherwise we shall misunderstand him altogether.[4] Though responsive to the call of the time-spirit, Chaucer was not limited by it. So while remaining essentially true to the life and characteristic ideals of his time, he was also true to the eternal verities in human nature, which make him not only a poet of the age but also for all time. While consolidating the great achievement of the past, the age of Chaucer was looking forward to far-reaching social changes in the future through his poetry, thereby anticipating the modern age with all its problems "which either sprang into existence or made

1. W. F. Ker : Medieval English Literature, p. 169.
2. Taine : Literary History of the English People, p. 146.
3. Hudson : An Introduction to the Study of Literature, p. 40.
4. Jebb : Classical Greek History, p. 29.

themselves specially troublesome in the sixty years of Chaucer's life".[1]

Fourteenth century England, as mentioned above, was essentially an age of transition and social unrest. The old feudalism was a dying institution towards the end of the century though a potent social force it its earlier past when the outward forms and showy magnificence of chivalry were a part of the natural life in England. King Edward III himself was a patron of the tournament. He still kept a Round Table at Windsor after King Arthur and instituted the chivalric Order of the Garter. The medieval conception of the universe with the earth as its centre still dominated men's thoughts. Planetary influence upon mortals was still an article of belief of the average man. Men's tempers and ailments still combined to be referred by medical experts to the proportion of "humours" in their bodies. The spiritual life of man was regarded as the only life worth leading, affecting men's thoughts and their sense of values. Thus, we must remember that when the first intimations of the Renaissance assumed definite form ushering in the modern world like the first streaks of the dawn, the medieval world still stood. "Side by side they stood, the old and the new, essentially hostile to each other, yet blended and intermingled through the whole range of society, often in most incongruous fashion.[2] In its intellectual ferment the world of 14th century England had much the same character as the age of Shakespeare or Elizabeth. There was the same glow of patriotism and national consciousness consequent upon a series of brilliant victories against a foreign foe ; there was the same 'spirit of revolt' against a foreign church ; and though the outward forms of medievalism still survived, there was at work the same 'leaven of new ideas and of a new concep-

Medievel & Modern Renaissance

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1. Kittredge : Chaucer and His Poetry, p. 76.
2. Root, P.K. : The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 66.

tion of life,' reinforced by a new interest in the works of classical antiquity, coming overseas from Italy ; literature and art was breaking away from the conventional and under the influence of new models, was drinking again at the fountain-head of Nature. Such periods of restlessness and change have often given birth to great creative literature."[1] Labour was already giving trouble in many ways and the down-trodden peasantry were exasperated by taxation. The Black Death had cut down the supply of farm-hands throughout the country. Theories of government that men held divine, were now in the melting-pot and the significant event of the period was the rapid growth of the British Parliament. The art of war was also undergoing an alarming change with the invention of gun-power which spelt the death of chivalry. The increasing corruptions and abuses in the church prepared the ground for the advent of the Reformation. Due to the early effects of the Renaissance scholarship was no longer the monopoly of the church. The Renaissance was also the precursor of the growth of a new individualism which brought in its train all those new ideas and conceptions leading to a virtual social revolution. Some of these characteristics of the age of Chaucer may now be considered in detail below :—

Nationalism and the language question

Chaucer was born at a most interesting time in English history, when the stirrings of nasionalism were beginning to make itself felt due to the operation of certain political events culminating in a series of military conquests during the years 1340-1369. The accession of Edward III saw the beginning of the Hundred Years War with France, which began in 1337 but continued with occasional breaks uptill 1453. An early naval victory at Sluys over the French infused into the English hearts a

1. Op. cit , p. 70.

strong sense of national pride, which was further reinforced by the victories of Crecy and Poitiers in 1346 and 1356 respectively. This war welded together the different races and communities of England, such as, Saxons, Normans and Danes, into one race as never before. From the Norman conquest in 1066 till about 1300 England was composed of two races *viz.*, the conquering Normans and the conquered Saxons. During these 300 years modern English was slowly evolving out of the conflict of languages. At the time of Chaucer's birth English and French—the two rival tongues in England were locked in a kind of death-struggle as a result of these political events, in which English was showing sure signs of being the victor. Hitherto the language of the rulers, the aristocracy and the law-courts was French while that of the peasants and serfs was English In 1362 the law-courts yielded and banished Norman French which was also to some extent the language of fashion, from their archives Parliament also followed suit the same year. When Chaucer was a boy, English was already beginning to displace Norman French as the language in which school boys translated their Latin authors. The poorer folk must have always used English but now the lord of the manor, the franklin, the priest, the lawyer, the prioress and the merchant did so too. By the beginning of the 14th century Norman French lost entirely its hold upon English life at large. The complete triumph of English was signalised by the statute of 1362. The main cause of this ultimate supremacy of English over French was that the nation no longer consisted of two different races—the oppressor French and the oppressed Saxons. The English bowmen and archers had demonstrated their skill in fighting in the Hundred Years' War over the peers, the Norman barons and the mail-clad knights. It was the success in these wars that went far in breaking down the barriers between the two races

which were now welded into one nation. The Normans ceased to look upon England as a convenient province and began to regard it as their home. Apart from the struggle between English and French, however, there was a more serious struggle going on for supremacy between the four chief dialects of England *viz*., The East Midland, the Northern, the Southern and the West Midland. It was Chaucer that by using the East Midland dialect in his poems assisted it to its victory over other dialects. It soon became the court language. The two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge also began to use it, and so did the merchants and people of the capital. It will not be extravagant to say that its ultimate victory might have been delayed a little had not a poet of Chaucer's eminence, genius and popularity set the seal of his approval on this dialect. In this way this provincial dialect (East Midland English) attained the dignity of the national language. Chaucer is therefore justly called the first poet of the English language.

The second period of Chaucer's life from 1369 onwards presents to us a gloomy picture of plagues and pestilences, and of constitutional conflicts between the new king, a despotic and unwise ruler, and his subjects, resulting in endless discord and confusion. Most of the social and political troubles of the reign of Richard II were the consequence of those natural calamities which befell the country from 1348 to 1370. Pestilence after pestilence ravaged the land and then in 1348-49 came the awful epidemic called the Black Death which in a single year swept away more than a third of the entire population.[1] The labourers demanded higher wages but the Parliament of Edward III, dominated by landlords passed tyrannous laws to regulate labour, which only made matters worse. The heavy cost of the French wars had to be met by a huge burden of taxation which led to the peasants' revolt

1. Legouis, E. : Chaucer, p. 61,

in 1381 under Wat Tyler, Jack Straw and John Ball. Though these revolts brought no immediate relief to the working classes, the new spirit of independence which had been aroused among the peasants could no longer be discounted. They were undoubtedly a sign of social unrest as well as of gradual awakening and awareness of a new power which the working men now became ready to use. The age old class distinction under feudal society now began to be challenged and the number of middle class people who entered strong protest against the prevailing moral degradation and corruption among the wealthy people, particularly the churchmen, increased. The growing importance of the middle classes increased the power of Parliament whose astounding growth is typical of the age. The first real Parliament had been convened by Edward I in 1296. Since then the power of Parliament had gone on increasing till by the end of the 13th century, Parliament first asserted the right to vote taxes and finally developed into a political institution vested with almost as much power and influence as it possesses to-day.

Rise of the peasantry

Growth of Parliament

Great changes were taking place in the sphere of religion too. Up-till 1309 England had been most loyal in her allegiance to the Pope who lived in Rome, and who was aspiring to be not only the 'World Priest' but also 'World King'. But in that year the Pope came under the domination of the French King—England's enemy. When the holy father became a creature of the French King, loyalty to the Pope came into conflict with hatred of France and the new sentiment of national patriotism proved stronger.[1] Parliament in the reign of Edward III embarked on

Corruption of Church

1. Root. P. K, : The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 69

legislation to check the interference of the Pope in secular affairs. During the period the Popes were weak men unable to hold and check the members of the papal court and the church officials. In these circumstances the papal court had become a centre of luxury and vice and the corruption at the top had spread through the whole body. "Many church officials tended to regard sin, not as a wickedness to be cured but as an opportunity of filling the church's coffers".[1] The church's claim to grant pardon and absolution was challenged by Wycliffe while Chaucer merely "recorded what he saw or what the man in the street saw. So he gibbetted the summoner, who hangs in the sight of all to this day."[2] Chaucer himself took little serious interest in social reform. Yet, the portraits which he draws of the fat, pleasure-loving monk, the merry and wanton friar, and that clever rogue, the pardoner, who wanders about hawking indulgences and relics show that he was alive to the shocking state of things which existed in the religious world of his time."[3] Contemporary with Chaucer was John Wycliffe, a scholar and a divine. was one the first Englishmen to challenge the authority of the Pope. He also gave up his high position at Oxford to translate the Bible into vigorous English. His idea was to make the teaching of the Bible available in English so that through its guidance people could work out their own salvation. The Lollard movement was the first opposition of importance to Catholicism in England. Chaucer's portrait of the Poor Parson, a shepherd, who protects his flock from the wolf is so delightful that many have thought of Chaucer as a Lollard who was depicting the been ideal of what a parish should be. But Chaucer, though admiring virtue when he met it, was no Puritan and is

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1. Brett James, N. G. : Introducing Chaucer, p. 60.
2. Op. cit., p. 60.
3. Hudson : An Outline History of English Literature, p. 18.

simply paying the tribute of an ordinary man to transcendent merit."[1]

One of the outstanding features of medieval life was pilgrimage. A particular occasion for going on a pilgrimage was furnished by the murder of Thomas A. Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury in December, 1170. He was canonized as St. Thomas of Canterbury in 1173, and the Pope gave plenary indulgence to whoever undertook a pilgrimage to his shrine. His death anniversary was an unique occasion when one hundred thousand pilgrims journeyed to Canterbury, but every year and almost every day came pilgrims to the dead hero. "All through the Middle Ages the cult of St. Thomas grew and a visit to his shrine became so usual a thing that the pace of the average pilgrim on horseback gave rise to the expression "Canterbury gallop."[2] In medieval England St. Thomas dominated the religious life of the times to such an extent that he is regarded as the outstanding figure and the focal point of pilgrimages. Although the religious fervour, which led devout Christians to undertake pilgrimages to the Holy Land, had waned and almost spent itself, there was still sufficient enthusiasm to encourage pilgrimages. Many went on pilgrimages to satisfy their love of travel and adventure even though travelling was difficult, unsafe and expensive. All sorts and conditions of people were out on the roads—beggars, outlaws, escaped convicts, friars, pardoners and summoners. "On the roads were perils of all kinds.........In the story of Chanticleer, told by the Nonnes Priest, we hear of a traveller who was murdered at a way-side for his money, and the culprit was detected by a vivid dream which his friend dreamed twice."[3]

Pilgrimage to Canterbury

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1. Brett James, N. G.: Introducing Chaucer, p. 66.
2. Op. cit., p. 75.
3. Op. cit., p. 80.

The Position of women

In the 14th century women did not seem to have been accorded a high position. Peasant women were doomed to a life of drudgery at home and in the fields. They spun and wove wool into different kinds of coarse cloth. Education was confined to upper classes at the nunneries and monastic houses for women where besides teaching dainty table manners, courtesy and refinement, daughters of the rich were taken in and taught French, religion, reading and writing. Child marriage was common in high society. The only alternative to marriage-life open to a woman was a nunnery. While courtly poets exalted women to the position of goddesses inspired by ideas of chivalry, the church more often than not regarded women as a temptation, a snare to be rigorously avoided if a virtuous life was to be led, and the source of all evil. But to ordinary persons, of course, women were neither the snare of the cleric nor the ideal of the courtly poet. Although the Wife of Bath is Chaucer's high-water mark of satire and there are scattered about his writings rather facetious remarks regarding women and their failings,—yet few poets have given striking examples of gentleness and fidelity of women as Chaucer *e. g.*, when he says in the *Merchant's Tale* : "Marriage is a ful gret sacrament" and again, "A wyf is godles yifte varrayly."

Chaucer's London

And now remains to be described the immediate socia context of Chaucer—his London. The delightful picturel of London painted by Morris who was a careful student of Medievalism and was medieval in outlook and ideals in some of his writings, may be a little exaggerated but it is subs antially true :

"Forget six centuries overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town ;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,

And dream of London, small and white and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green
Think that below bridge the green and lapping waves.
Smite some few keels that bear Levantine slaves,
Cut from the yew wood on the burnt up hill,
And pointed jars that great hands toiled to fill,
And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,
Florence gold cloth, and Ypres rapery,
And cloth of Bruges, and hogs heads of Guienne
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's pen
Moves over bills of lading."

Subsequently discovered evidence about the actual state of things in London in Chaucer's time draws our attention to narrow, insanitary streets with the river Thames running into the city, dark houses mostly without glass windows, primitive heating arrangements in the houses and rooms full of smoke and roads "stopped up by divers filth and dung thrown therein by persons who have houses along the said course, to the great nuisance and damage of all the city." But that it was a city of gardens, streams, fields and trees, is essentially true. Side by side with filth, dirt, squalor, ignorance and coarseness there existed the splendour, romance and the colourful elements characteristic of the Middle Ages. London was still a walled town and beyond the city gates there were great stretches of green grass, and far beyond forests which were haunts of the deer, the grey wolf, the boar and the wild bull. The streets were often scenes of gay processions, pilgrimages and pageants. "Old London Bridge was thought of by Londoners to be one of the wonders of the medieval world."[1] Criminals were led through the narrow street to places of their execution and their heads were struck on the spikes of the London Bridge. A stone bridge, built in John's reign by Peter of Cole church, almost exactly on the side of the

1. Brett James, N. G.; Introducing Chaucer, p. 22.

Roman crossing, spanned the river and connected Chaucer's London with Southwark on the opposite bank of the Thames. Near the end of the bridge was the old Tabard Inn, in whose square courtyard pilgrims used to gather while on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket at Canterbury. Two pictures of home life on two different scales are presented by Chaucer in his poems *viz.*, the country-house of the Franklin and the small sooty cottage of the poor widow in the Nun's Priest's Tale of Chanticleer. "The core of the townsfolk was made up of tradesmen and craftsmen, organised in professional and religious guilds......Even in London very many Londoners had come in from the surrounding and distant countries where they had some direct personal concern with agriculture."[1] "The most distinguishing feature of the literary scene was the natural predisposition in favour of audible, social reading of literature."[2]

2. Chaucer's life

Geoffrey Chaucer, son of John Chaucer, wine merchant of Thames Street, who owned a small estate at Ipswich, was born in London about 1340. His father was occasionally employed on service for the King Edward III. He may have been educated at St. Paul's School. London. He spoke French as well as English from early childhood. By 1357 he had begun his career as a page in the household of Lionel, Duke of Clarence and of his wife, Countess of Ulster, both in London and Yorkshire. In 1357 he was sent to France as a soldier in the army with Edward III and his four sons, He was taken prisoner, but was soon ransomed for £ 16 paid by the King himself in 1360. In 1367 he was one of the valets of the King's Chamber, a post always held by gentlemen and received a pension of 20 marks as a member of the King's household. In 1369, on the death of Blanche, the wife of

1. Boris Ford ; the Age of Chaucer, p. 83.
2. Op. cit., p. 78,

John of Gaunt, he wrote his *Deth of Blanche the Duchesse* in honour of her memory. From 1370 to 1378 he was sent on a series of diplomatic missions to France, Flanders and Italy. His Italian missions brought him in contact with Italian literature and Italian men of letters. About this time *i. e.*, in 1379 terminated the first period of Chaucer's authorship *i. e.*, the French period of translation. His Italian mission is of particular interests to us. "These meetings symbolise the first literary intercourse between England and Italy, it is the first ray of the ranaissance lighting upon English imagination."[1] When he returned to England he carried with him manuscripts of Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. In 1382 he was appointed Comptroller of Petty Customs in the port of London, with leave to discharge his duties by deputy, which enabled him to devote more time to writing and to undertake a pilgrimage to Canterbury in 1385. With this year his second *i. e.*, Italian period of authorship may be said to close. In 1386 he became Member of Parliament for Kent. During this prosperous period h wrote his version of *Boethe-us the Hous of Fame* ; *the Parlement of Foules* (1382 ?) ; *Troilus*, *the Legend of Good Women* (1386 ?) ; and he probably planned the *Canterbury Tales*, his first great work.

His fortunes suffered some eclipse when his patron, John of Gaunt, was abroad and his brother, Gloucester exercised supreme power in the State. He was dismissed from service, leaving him no other source of income than his pension. He saw lean days still 1389, when Richard II made him Commissioner of Works. This post too, he lost in 1391 ; but in 1394 another pension was granted to him. From 1386 to his death great period of original work which contains, besides *The Canterbury Tales* and other works already named, some minor poems. He had married Philippa, a lady of the court, perhaps in 1367. She

1. Legouis : Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 33,

died in 1387. He seems to have had two sons—Thomas and Lewis. He died on the 25th October, 1400 in a house at Westminster. He was buried in Westminster Abbey and was the first to occupy "poet's corner' there.

3. Chaucer's Literary Career

We know from Chaucer's life that in his early youth and manhood he lived much of his time in France, that in early middle life he was often in Italy and that, last of all, he spent the whole of his later days in England. Now if we take his authenticated works we shall find that they sort themselves into three fairly well-defined groups or periods—the French, the Italian and the English. This kind of grouping is useful and convenient but neither completely accurate nor indicative of the form and substance of the work of the master-craftsmen. Chaucer who did not adopt a French manner of style during a certain period then drop it to adopt an Italian manner to be followed by his own style as an English poet. "He always was himself" like all great writers.

"Chaucer has sometimes been represented as a French poet writing in English not only a 'great Translator' but so thoroughly in sympathy with the ideas and the style or French poetry that he is French in spirit even when he is original."[1] There is a great deal of truth in this remark. Chaucer had his early education in French and at no time in his literary career was he completely free from french influence. He had his early literary training also from French authors. He began as a *trouvere* in English as a translator of *Le Roman de la Rose*. "Thereafter we see that he has continued to borrow and adopt from French and Italian poets freely even when he is most 'English'......The art of Chaucer, therefore implies and includes the art—the conventions and themes—of the *trouveres* (medieval epic poets of northern France) and of

1. Ker, W. P. . Medieval English Literature, P, 163,

his French and Italian contemporaries,"[1] "His genius was nourished, to begin with, on the French poetry and romance which formed the favourite reading of the court and cultivated society during his youth. Naturally he followed the fashion, and his early work was done on French models."[2] In the hands of Chaucer English poetry at last reached the same some kind of perfection as was shown in French as early as the twelfth century. English was thus the last of the languages in which the poetic ideal of courtesy and grace peculiar to the Middle Ages was realised. A man of originating genius like Chaucer was able to adapt the English language to the French manner of thought and expression.[3]

(1) The French Period

The first poem in chronological order is the Chaucerian *Romaunt of the Rose* (before 1373) which is a delightful translation of the original French poem and there could not be a more intimate introduction to the medieval French romances and allegories of courtly love and to the poetry of the *Trouveres* than this. It is an elaborate allegory in a dream setting of Love, the rose growing in a mystic garden, guarded by symbolic power from the lover's approach. It is the embryo out of which all Chaucer's poetry grows. Chaucer wrote it in English "that was spoken around him and out of which he made his poetry, drawing on it abundantly in his later poetry to express his direct observation and knowledge of the life around him.'[4] Thus right through Chaucer's poetry the personifications of the *Ramaunt of the Rose* may be observed in process of growing into the persons of the *Canterbury Tales.* During this period he also wrote the Book of the

1. Boris Ford : The Age of Chaucer, p. 11.
2. Hudson, W. H. : An Outline History of English Literature, p. 21,
3. Ker, W. P. : Medieval English Literature p. 164,
4. Boris Ford : The Age of Chaucer, p. 16,

Duchess in 1369. It is an elegy written to solace Chaucer's life-long patron at court, John of Gaunt, the king's third son, for the death of his wife, the Duchess Blanche. Though in form and nature it is like the *Ramaunt of the Rose*, it is one of his earliest original poems. It is in the form of a dream, in which the poet follows a hunting party and comes across a knight in black, the hero of the poem, representing John of Gaunt. The poet accosts the knight who enumerates the virtues of his mistress for whose death he laments. Inspite of its prolixity, loose verbosity, repetitions, allegorical character and its use of the usual French conventions of courtly love, it is not without a charm and freshness of its own—a few touches of pathos and realism in some fine strokes of picturesque description, and of humour.

(2) **The Italian Period** (c. 1372—1384)

Chaucer's visit to Italy in 1372 marked a turning-point in his literary career. It covers the period he spent on diplomatic missions in Genoa, Pisa, Florence and Lombardy. Imbibing readily the new spirit of Renaissance—the humanism of the New Learning—under the influence of his Italian masters, Chaucer reoriented his medieval outlook as a result of the impact of the new intellectual forces into his poetry, retaining at the same time his medieval culture and scholastic learning. He read Petrarch, and possibly met and talked with him also and studied the stories of Boccaccio. In this period he wrote the *Parliament of Fowls*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Story of Grieselda* and the *House of Fame*, all of which show the influence of Italian literature. "From this Italianization Chaucer derived a variety of range, a heightening of style and an improvement in poetic natural gifts."[1] In the *Parliament of Fowls* Chaucer celebrated the betrothal of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia. The poem is put in the

1. Palgrave : Golden Treasury, Book 1.

form of a dream. After reading Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* Chaucer is represented as falling asleep. Scipio appears to him in person in his dream and leads him to the marvellous gardens where Venus has her temple. "He sees Cupid, Venus and all the abstractions proper to such a garden and lastly the noble goddess Nature herself. It is St. Velentine's Day, and she has summoned the birds in their hierachies before her to decide on which shall win for his love the eagle on her wrist."[1] Nature holds a full parliament of birds, who express the most delicate sentiments ever heard in courts of love. Some of the loveliest passages of the poem are the dramatic dialogues between the birds assembled in parliament We are introduced here to one of the most popular genres of medieval literature *viz*, the Bird and and Beast Fable. "In the clash between the 'gentils' and the 'Cherles' in the debate of birds, there emerges one of the social comedy themes of Chaucer's later poetry. The exchange of satirical abuse , yet another recurrent feature of medieval poetry introduced in this poem."[2] It is a strange intermixture of allegory, mythology, sentimental poetry and comedy enlivened with a spirit of genteel humour and lightness of touch, its aim being to expose the affectation and pretences of the refinements of courtly love. The conventions of courtly love are mildly satirised in his *Troilus and Criseyde* in which Chaucer told the love-story of the Trozan prince, Troilus and Creseida, based on Boccaccio's *Filostrato*. In many parts it is direct translation from the original but it contains enough material which point to the growth of Chaucer's genius *viz.*, interests of character in Creseida invested with the freshness and innocence of a young maiden and the virtual creation of the comic character of Pandarus who becomes the main centre of our interest. "The poem is full of human interest, and pathos, vivid in colour and the

1. Coghill, N. : The Poet Chaucer, p. 56.
2. Boris Ford : The Age of Chaucer, pp. 18-19.

sense of the beauty and fleetingness of life, and if he had written nothing else, it would by itself entitle him to be ranked among the greatest English poets."[1] The *House of Fame* is a dream-poem which shows how Chaucer could bring in common things in the old artificial poetry and yet at the same time be original and fresh. There are in this poem clear indications of his personal traits breaking through a conventional scheme of things in all their freshness and originality. It shows also the influence of Chaucer's newly-acquired intimacy with Italian humanism. The poet finds himself in the temple of Venus from where he is taken in a giddy flight by a golden eagle to the House of Fame. Here he watches the strange and capricious way in which the goddess distributed her favours and then goes to the House of Rumour in order to discover how news is manufactured. Chaucer did not care to finish it which proves that the fiction—the device of the poet's being carried away by an eagle, the portrait of the goddess and all the rest of it—was not entirely to his taste. The best passages in the poem are those in which there is an intrusion of humour. There are obvious resemblances between this poem and the famous work of the Florentine poet, Dante, the *Divina Comedia*. But there are unmistakable signs of Chaucer's realism asserting itself as he was taking his flight on the back of the eagle through an allegorical sky. "Flying is not to his taste and he frankly prefers walking; let him have feet, not wings. Just as Wordsworth, later, refused to accompany Coleridge on his aerial craft, so Chaucer will not follow Dante into the regions where the earth is lost sight of. Solid ground suits him best. When travelling through the lofty Milky Way, he soon begins to regret the good muddy tracks which plough the road from London to Canterbury."[2] The vein of humour in the poem stands in sharp contrast to the sublime flights of Dante. Being a humorist, he sees

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1. Pollard, A. W.: The Prologue. p. XXVII.
2. Legouis: The Poetry of Chaucer, p. 61.

the comic aspect of the thing but consoles himself with the light scepticism, which is of his nature, stating his preference for walking with his feet on the solid earth. The poem is a master-piece of comic fantacy, with a graver undertone of the vanity of human wishes."[1] The autobiographical passages in the poem are those in which Chaucer is speaking of himself, of his life "as an hermyte," absorbed in reading, who goes home from his work to abstract himself from the world and lose himself in his beloved books 'tyl fully dasewyd ys (his) looke'. For the reason stated above *The Legend of Good Women* was also left incomplete. This poem was intended to be a series of lives of chaste women—a task which the poet assures us in the *Prologue* he had taken up at the command of the God of Love by way of penance for having written against his devotees. "The earliest of the legends of Cupid's saints, the stories of Cleopatra, Thisbe and Dido are hardly less good, but the theme Chaucer had chosen left little scope for variety, and when he had written nine of the nineteen tales he had planned, he turned aside to take up a happier task."[2] The source of the poem is Ovid's *Heroides* The idea of the lover as the servant of his mistress was also taken from the Latin amatory poets.

All this time Chaucer was feeling his way through imitative work and trying to acquire sufficient self-confidence to break away from his foreign masters. He has already given enough proof of his original genius in his choice of the vehicle of his poetry. Unlike his contemporary Gower, a man of literary talent, he did not allow himself to be tempted by Latin or French. Soon Chaucer shot far ahead of Gower and entered fields where Gower was unable to follow him. With Chaucer's poetry English was brought up to the level of French and English poetry

1. Boris Ford ; The Age of Chaucer, p. 19.
2 Pollard, A. W, : Chaucer's The Prologue, pp, XXX-XXXI;

at long last reached the same kind of perfection as French.[1] Starting from mere translation he proceeded through irritation, then developed a method of his own which even though imitative, still allowed some scope for his originality, practised smooth and flowing versification and then at last discarded the conventional refinements, sentiments and the phrasing of the French school in favour of his characteristic English methods of writing poetry thereby attaining complete literary independence in his *Canterbury Tales*, his masterpiece.

(3) **English Period** (1384—90)

The *Canterbury Tales* is the great work of his English period, designed about 1387, and written for the greater part in heroic couplets (about 17,000 lines). The main *Prologue* is of particular interest for the vivid picture it presents of contemporary life. Tales and tellers were many, varied and popular, in the Middle Ages. In Boccaccio's *Decameron* a company of lords and ladies was supposed to have fled from Florence during the plague of 1348 and spent their time with story-telling in a villa. In his *Legend of Good Women* Chaucer had already found a common thread to link together a string of stories He adopts a somewhat similar framework in this *Canterbury Tales*. A party of twenty-nine pilgrims are assembled at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, about to travel to the shrine of Becket of Canterbury and of each of these the poet draws a striking portrait. The qualities and characteristics which are peculiarly English in character, which are displayed in Chaucer's poetry as follows : his good sense ; his freedom from morbid mysticism, his hatred of cant, his acute power of observation, his graphic portraiture of character, not as abstractions but as individuals, true to the likeness of the class and, about all, his irrepressible and genial humour.

1, Ker, W. P. : Medieval English Literature, p. 163.

(4) The Canterbury Tales—The Prologue

It is too often assumed that Chaucer was indebted to the *Decameron* of Boccaccio for the plan of the *Canterbury Tales.* It is quite possible that he did borrow the idea from that source—a good example present before his eyes; but it is just as possible that this idea was suggested to his mind by the *Vision Concerning Piers Plowman* or by Gower's *Confessio Amantis.* Anywhere Chaucer did not intend, like Boccaccio, to string together his stories by a convenient thread or common link. What he intended to stress was the variety of the characters—the leading feature of his *Tales* and to this end he took care to pick and choose only those characters who would be types of the class to which they belonged with marked individual characteristics. It was a selfish motive that prompted Boccaccio's lords and ladies to seek shelter in a hillside villa and to entertain and keep up one another's spirits by telling tales. But Chaucer's pilgrims had a partly religious object in going to Canterbury, though no doubt they meant to combine business with pleasure.[1] Thus Chaucer had before him other examples of collections of stories besides Boccaccio but in his *Canterbury Tales* he gave a new significance by his insight, his genial humour and humanism.

The framework of the Tales is suggested in the Prologue. This has already been hinted in our general survey of Chaucer's poetry in the previous section. A few more points as to the nature of the framework and the extent to which he was able to carry out his ambitious plan, need be considered here.

As already mentioned, there were twenty-nine persons in the company besides our Host of the Tabard Inn and Chaucer himself, who were to tell stories. Accordingly Chaucer's original plan would call for one hundred and twenty-four tales. The original proposal was that each

1. Brett James, N. G. : Introducing Chaucer, p. 74.

member of the party should tell two tales on the way to Canterbury, and two on the way back. The Host would be the judge to the stories as to which of them was the best story-teller so that he might be treated by all the rest to a supper on their return to the Tabard Inn. As he proceeded with the work Chaucer realised that this original plan of four stories per pilgrim would be far too lengthy. So he shortened his plan to one tale a piece on the outward journey. Even on this reduced scale the work was not completed by Chaucer. Thus only twenty complete tales are told, besides four other fragments of tales to divide among thirty-one pilgrims of whom however the Host (Harry Bailly or Bailey) was not planned as a story-teller. Leaving out the Host there remain thirty pilgrims of whom seven are altogether silent, but Chaucer himself makes two attempts so that the numbers agree. "Chaucer is unpardonably interrupted—the interruption is in excellent taste, however, from the poet's point of view—by the Host in his first attempt, *Sir Topas*, and substitutes the wearisome prose tale of Melibeus."[1]

The *Tales* have come down to us in a number of disconnected groups but the tales within each group are linked with each other by short pieces of narrative and talk among the pilgrims.

The following is the arrangement of the tales within the groups.

I	Day	A	Tales of the Knight, Miller, Reeve, Cook.
			Halt for the night at Dartford.
II	,,	B	Tales of the Man of Law, Shipman, Prioress, Chaucer (two) Monk, Nun's Priest.
			Halt for the night at Rochester.
III	,,	C	Tales of the Doctor and Pardoner.
		D	Wife of Bath, Friar, Summoner.
		E	Clerk and Merchant
			Half for the night at Ospringe.

1. Wyatt, A. J. : Nun's Priest's Tale, p. 11.

IV „ F Tales of the Squire and Franklin.
G Second Nun, Canon's Yeoman.
H Manciple, and
I Parson.

THE PILGRIM'S WAY TO CANTERBURY

The journey from Southwark to Canterbury took four days assuming that the references to the route of the pilgrims can be relied on. The tales in Groups A and B were told on April 17th *i. e.*, the first day, those in Groups C, D, and E probably on the second day and the rest on the third day.

"In this arrangement several points are debatable, but at least it is certain that the Nun's Priest's Tale is told not far from Rochester (because when the Host asks the Monk to begin the tale which precedes it, he says, 'Lo ! Rouchestre stant heer faste by'), that Chaucer thinks of the story told on a spring day and that from the shipman's Tale to the Nun's Priest's Tale the series is unbroken, with all the links complete."[1]

The root principle of the *Tales* was that Chaucer united the diversity of his tales by allotting them to a diversity of tellers, joined in a common purpose. While a second organising principle was evidently to paint a veritable national portrait gallery of fourteenth century England. "In all our literature there is not such another picture of a whole society, and Chaucer contrived it in some two and thirty characters and 860 lines."[2] He intended the variety of these characters to be the leading feature of his work. Though limited mainly to the middle-classes, they are really very comprehensive. To this end he chose characters who would be typical of the class to which they belonged and also took care to mark out clearly their individual characteristic so that they might be interesting on their own account. Only the

1. Sisam : The Nun's Priest's Tale, p. XXXVI.
2. Coghill Nevill : The Poet Chaucer, pp. 115-116.

very highest class *viz.*, royalty and the very lowest are left out. "The military profession is represented by a knight, a squire and a yeoman ; the ecclesiastical by a prioress, a nun (her secretary, a monk, a friar, a sumnour (summoner of those changed under the jurisdiction of the church courts), pardoner (or seller of pardons). a poor parson, and a clerk of Oxford, who is a student of divinity. There we have a lawyer and a physician, and running down the social scale, a number of miscellaneous characters whom one cannot classify—a franklin (free-holder of land), a merchant, a shipman (sajlor), a miller, a cook, a manciple (caterer for colleges), a reeve (land steward), a haberdasher, a carpenter, weaver, a dyer, tap-yeer (tapestry maker), a ploughman (the poor parson's brother), and a well-to-do west-country cloth-maker named Allison, who, however, is better known as the Wife of Bath."[1]

Chaucer has delineated the characters of these persons in the Prologue itself in his own inimitable way. The prologue is thus a masterpiece of insight, intense power of observation, sureness of touch, fine discrimination, and subtle humour, presenting, as it does, a true and comprehensive picture of Chaucer's age in all its varied aspects. The Prologue is justly called the first act in the drama of the Tales as after the portraits of the above characters are first drawn statically in it, they develop a vitality of their own and reveal themselves dynamically in the individual tales. Inspite of Dryden's adverse criticism of Chaucer, Dryden is full of admiration for "his most wonderful comprehensive nature as he has taken into the compass of his tales the various manners and humours of the whole English nation in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. Here is God's plenty."[2] For the first time Chaucer made each tale suit the teller.

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1. Hudson, W. H. : An Outline History of English Literature, pp. 22-23.
2. Dryden : Preface to Chaucer, p. 13.

"The pilgrims do not exist for the sake of the stories, but vice versa"[1] Chaucer chose for each pilgrim the tales best suited to his class and his temperament,"[2] so that in his hands each has also an enduring interest and a universal meaning for all time. Chaucer seems to have mastered the delicate art of striking the delicate balance between individual and typical characteristics so as to give each character its ideality which is for all time, yet together the characters—"time-less creations on a time-determined stage"[3] together sum up the whole society of his time. "Some of the names or titles are altered by time but the characters themselves remain unaltered, and consequently they are the physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life."[4]

"Chaucer's employment of the ten-syllable line in the seven-line stanza for narrative was his own dicovery. The technical originality of Chaucer was, first, that he learned the secret of the ten-syllable line, and later that he used it for regular narrative and made it the proper heroic verse in English."[5] The *Tales* is written in the dialect known as the East Midland. As this geographical area included London and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, it is natural that the dialect spoken in this area should predominate over others. It has been forcing its way into prominence for nearly a century before Chaucer's time. "And now when it became customary for English to be used in the King's palace and in law courts, it was the East Midland dialect of English that was used. Undoubtedly the facts of its being used in Chaucer's work and the printing of the *Tales* by Caxton, did very much to ensure that the East Midland dialect

1. Kittredge ; Chaucer and his Poetry, p. 62,
2. Legouis : Chaucer, p. 19.
3. Coghill, N. : The Poet Chaucer, p. 177.
4. Ten Brink ; Chaucer, p. 72.
5. Ker, W. P. : Medieval English Literature, pp. 178-79.

should become the standard literary medium."[1] "Chaucer found his native tongue a dialect and left it a language."[2]

(5) The Setting of the Nun's Priest's Tale

It was probably on 16th April, 1385, that Chaucer—then nearly fifty years old—was one of the thirty pilgrims assembled in the Tabard Inn, Southwark, and got himself ready to undertake the journey to Canterbury. The host, Harry Bailly, had already arranged with the pilgrims that each should tell four tales, two on the outward journey and two on the way home, the most successful and popular teller receiving an invitation to a dinner at the Inn, to be paid for by the rest. This plan was approved by the guests and the pilgrimage began.

On the first day the Knight, the Miller, the Reeve, and the Cook provided the tales. The Knight told the story of Palamoh and Arcite, two youths who were as brothers, and whose affection was heightened by a shared captivity until the day when love for the same maiden brought them to face each other as enemies. The Host was very pleased with the Knight's tale and the whole company also welcomed it. He asked the Monk for the next but, inspite of protests from the Host, the Miller, Robin, insisted on telling a ribald tale. Then the Reeve told a tale of dishonest Miller. This tale like that of the Miller, was not quite suitable for the company.[3] And now the Cook was ready to tell a tale of an inn-keeper befooled by a rascally London 'prentice.

On the second day the Man of Lawe, the Shipman, the Prioress and the Poet himself told their tales. The Man of Lawe told the tale of Constance who suffered unknown hardships among heathens. Then the Shipman told the tale of a rascally monk who married on a discredita-

1. Robinson, F. W. : The Nun's Priest's Tale, p. 9.
2. Lowes, J. L. ; The Art of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 26.
3. Brett James, N. G. : Introducing Chaucer, p. 108

ble intrigue of deception. He is followed by the Prioress who tells "the well-known tale of the murder by the Jews of a male cloisterer who went on singing after he was dead, and so gave his friends intimation of his death.[1] Chaucer himself was then called upon for a tale. Chaucer started telling the dull tale of Sir Thopas, intentionally satirising some of the poems of the day, in rhyme. The Host stopped him and said, "I am weary of your non-sense and trashy doggerel." Chaucer asked him why he alone should be stopped and got a down-right answer :

> 'Thou doost noght elles but despendest tyme,—
> Sire, at a word, thou shalt no longer ryme,
> Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste,[2]
> Or telle in prose somwhat at the leeste,
> In which ther be som murther or som doctryne.[3]

"This last suggestion is taken up in Chaucer's tale of Melibeus and his kind wife, Prudence, who sought to console her husband after she had been beaten and her daughter wounded to death by his enemies. The Host merely regretted that his own shrewish wife had not the chance of hearing this story and acquiring a little of the saintly patience of Dame Prudence."[4]

By this time it was near Rochester (the Host himself says, 'Lo ! Rouchestre stant heer faste by'—) and the Host now called upon Sir Peers (the Monk) to tell his tale. The Monk said that he would let the company know he was a learned man, with a hundred formal tales of tragedy at his command. The subject-matter of the Monk's tragedies was a favourite theme in the Middle Ages. But it was a rather gloomy subject for such a festive occasion. The Monk, then, proceeded to recount

1. Brett James, N. G. : Introducing Chaucer, p. 108.
2. Alliterative verse,
3. Instruction, edification.
4. Sisam, K. : Nun's Priest's Tale, p. XXXIX,

the tragic stories of Satan, Adam, Samson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Pompey, Nero, Croesus, Pedro and finally Count Hugolino and his three young children. When the Monk reached his seventeenth tragedy, the tale was so long and so sad that even the courteous Knight protested and said that as they were on a holiday, it would be pleasanter to hear of fun :

> "When a man hath been in poor estate,
> And climbeth up and waxeth fortunate,
> And there abideth in prosperity."

The Host too avows more bluntly that he is bored by these tales of distress,

> "Switch talkying is nat worth a boterflye,
> For therinne is ther no desport[1] ne gaine."

Such talk was not worth a butterfly and the whole company was not at all amused by the tragedies that were past and could not be mended. But for the jinglings of the bridle bells of the Monk the Host would have fallen asleep and the story would have been wasted.[2] As the Monk refused to tell a hunting story, the Host now called upon the Nun's Priest to "telle us swich thyng as may oure hertes glade." So Sir John, the Nun's Priest, told the story of Chanticleer, Dame Partelote and the Fox. He was one of the three priests who accompanied the Prioress. The Priest is introduced in the story in terms of lines 42 to 54. The epilogue to the tale gives a further description of the priest in terms of these lines—

> See which braunnes[3] hath this gentil preest,
> So grete a nekke, and swich a large breest
> He looketh as a sperhawk with his yen ;

1. Enjoyment.
2. Brett James, N. G. ; Introducing Chaucer, p. 112.
3. Muscles.

Him needeth nat his colour for to dyen
With Brazil,[1] ne with greyn[2] of Portingale.

"The priest himself appears to be full of fun : otherwise he would not have made a "fool discourse of freewill and pre-destination"—a subject which presumably he had dealt with in the pulpit many a time. He is intended as a contrast to his fellow, the monk, who so has depressed the pilgrims and to which the priest perts a depreciating allusion into the mouth of the cock."[3]

(6) Argument of the Nun's Priest's Tale

A cock, Chanticleer, and his seven hens including his favourite hen, Pertelote, were roosting in the hen-house of their owner, a poor widow who lived in her tiny sooty cottage. It so transpired that one day Chanticleer awoke Pertelote by his groans and confessed to a bad dream in which a beast, like a hound had tried to seize him. Pertelote tried to persuade her lord that his nightmare might be due to some digestive disturbances, and recommended a special diet. She also quoted the authority of Cato who advised people not to pay any heed to dreams. Her husband refused her deductions from Cato by lengthy references to the Latin classics, to Holy Writ, and to legends, but desired to put the whole business at the back of his mind, and to go about the business of the day. The cock decided to drop the subject for he said, "When I look upon the beauty of your face, all my fears vanish." So saying the cock and all his hens flew down from the beam and began to chuck about freely in the sun. But suddenly a sorrrowful mishap overtook him.

It happened that a black fox, Russell by name, was

1. A dye-wood.
2. A scarlet-dye.
3. Robinson, F. W. ; The Nun's Priest's Tale, p. 12.

all the time lying in wait for Chanticleer, and biding his time to fall upon him. As Chanticleer was singing merrily his eye rested upon a butterfly among the cabbages where e suddenly saw the fox crouching upon his belly. Up he started and cried out like one stricken with great fright. But before he could fly away the sly one spoke to him informing him of the friendly relations that had existed between the cock's parents and Russell, and hinting that the cock could not probably sing so well as his father had, for he would stand on tiptoe, stretch his neck and close his eyes to make the finer melody. Not to be outdone Chanticleer, like a man unconscious of treachery, began to beat his wings, stretched his neck and closed his eyes as he started to crow at the top of his voice. Forthwith the fox seized him and rushed from the yard, to the bewilderment of the cock's *entourage*; bearing him off in his neck towards the wood. The victim was thus carried away by the captor, to the accompaniment of yells from his prisoner. Chanticleer now made his bid for freedom, urging the fox to tell the farm-hands that their pursuit was in vain. He opened his mouth to boast of his superiority when the cock slipped out, flew into a tree and defied recapture.[1]

(7) (a) The sources of the Nun's Priest's Tale
(b) Chaucer's Treatment of them
(c) and appreciation of the mock-heroic epic

(a) The Sources of the Tale

What exactly was the source of the tale of the Cock and the Fox is of only academic interest, for the real interest lies in Chaucer's use, treatment and presentation of the source or sources. Many and varied were the resources of classical and medieval literature available to him. He had as little need to invent his plots as Shakespeare. He took his raw materials from various sources and laid all sorts of literature, Latin, French and Italian

1. Robinson, F. W. : The Nun's Priest's Tale, pp. 11-12.

under contribution but, like Shakespeare, whatever he borrowed he made entirely his own. "Chaucer and Shakespeare, though of course in different degrees of excellence and vivifying power, so frequently make dry bones live, transform dull chronicles, legends and stupid tales into literary gems, sparkling with animation and realism and invested with the deepest human interest.[1] In the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer has turned, for instance, to the medieval fabliaux as a source of some of his best tales. But Chaucer's treatment of the fabliaux "must be distinguished from the rudimentary tales that the fabiaux, as they existed orally, must in general have been in Chaucer's hands as they have been shaped with masterly comic art."[2]

The basic subject-matter of this poem—the story of Cock and the Fox—is as old as the world famous fables of Aesop of the sixth century B. C. It is also found in the folklore of most of the European peoples in some form or other. *e. g.*, the story of the Cock and the Wolf, in Latin verses attributed to Alcuin of York, who was Chaucer's right hand, the collection of stories by the monk Adhenar of the eleventh century, the Brussels M. S. of the twelfth century, all the fables of Marie de France written by her towards the end of the twelfth century etc. But Chaucer's treatment suggests rather the *animal epic*, probably the French *Roman de Renart*[3] (the story of Reynard) rather than the fable. This animal epic is based on a short version of thirty-eight lines by Marie of France and assigned to the early thirteenth century. The *Roman* consists of 453 lines which may be briefly summarised here in order that the alterations made by Chaucer for his comic art may be carefully studied :

1. Paindit, K. G. : Introduction to Chaucer, p. 31.
2. Boris Ford : The Age of Chaucer, pp, 17-18.
3. Vide Chaucer : Society's Originals and Analogues, Part II, for its English Translation.

"The fox lies in wait by the broken fence of a farm-yard, and frightens the hens; the cock asks what they are afraid of, and being informed, is very scornful of their terrors.

That their fears have impressed him, however, is evidenced by the dream Chanticleer has, in which he finds he is being carried away by a monster. His hen, Pinte, consoles him and the cock sleeps once more. This time the fox snaps at him, but misses. Renart does not retire, but begins to cajole the bird, remarking in the beauty of the voice of Chanticleer's late father. Our cock shows his quality, but the fox advises him to close his eyes and thus sing better. The plan succeeds, the cock is off his guard, and Renart carries him off by the neck. The whole farm-yard is disturbed, the farmer is blaming his wife for carelessness in not seizing the fox, and dogs and men chase the robber. The cock, resorting to strategy advises Renart to shout defiance at the pursuers. He attempts to do so, whereupon the bird escapes from between his jaws, flies into a tree, and warns the fox to escape or the dogs will get him."

Let us now compare the above version of the French *Roman* with Chaucer's in respect of the plot and note some very vital points of difference. This will be a valuable study because it will show us how deeply Chaucer's work is rooted in the past and gives us an indication of his treatment of his raw materials for the purpose of his art. In the first place the French version is much longer of the two, consisting, as it does, of 454 lines as against 198 lines devoted to the telling of the actual story by Chaucer; its style is rather diffuse, loose and sloppy and there are more repetitions. Secondly, the farmer in the *Roman* is a rich villain who has many cocks and hens whereas Chaucer assigns him to a poor widow to enlist our sympathy further and her loss.

Thirdly, the *Roman* makes mention of Reynard's previous attempt to seize Chanticleer but Chaucer omits it presumably because the age-long feud between foxes and farmyard fowls may well be assumed. It is also to be noticed that in the mock-heroic epic of Chaucer, Chanticleer and not the fox, who falls into a subordinate place, becomes the hero. Everything is done to raise Chanticleer to the position of a tragic hero whose one failing is his vanity for which he suffers at the hands of the fox. His dignified bearing and conduct enlist the admiration of everybody. "Great is his pluck in lying still in his captor's jaws, great the cleverness of his device to escape, great the dexterity with which he carries it out."[1] Even in those incidents which are common in Chaucer's version and the romance, these acquire a new significance in the former in order to meet the exigency of raising Chanticleer to the position of the hero. Fourthly, in Chaucer's version consistency is maintained in the reactions of Pertelote to Chanticleer's dream throughout *viz.*, in her first exclamation and her own opinion about her husband's dream being due entirely to his state of body for which she offers him a domestic prescription and Chanticleer in reply gives her a still more learned lecture. But no such consistency in the reactions of Pinte the Hen (corresponding to Pertelote in Chaucer) is noticeable in the *Roman*. Fifthly, in the *Roman* the adventure with the cock is "a mere episode a bit of folklore caught up into the romance, to break the monotony of Reynard's successes by showing how far once he was worsted."[2] In Chaucer the main centre of interest rests with Chanticleer and not the fox. The Nun's Priest justly says, "My tale is of a Cock."

But the great difference between the matter of the two stories lies in the additions made by Chaucer. The long moral aside, for instance, put into the mouth of the priest (*ll.* 4416-4456) has no counterpart in the *Roman* nor has

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1. Pollard, A. W. ; he Nun's Priest's Tale, p. XV.
2. Pollard. A. W, : The Nun's Priest's Tale, pp. XII-XV.

its very important section on dreams (*ll.* 460-500), with its illustrations derived from various sources.[1] It may be noted that of the 626 lines of Chaucer's poems, 428 lines have been shown as addition made by the poet.

The following are among the most important additions made by Chaucer: (1) description of the poor widow and her household (*ll.* 55-80); (2) the more brilliant household of Chanticleer and his wives (*ll.* 81-115); (3) Chanticleer's dream including a miniature portrait of the fox; (4) Madam Pertelote's observations on the ideal husband (*ll.* 145-151); (5) Her remarks on dreams and their medical aspects (*ll.* 155-203); (6) Chanticleer's refutation of the position taken up by her with the help of two stock examples of dream stories taken from Cicero (*ll.* 218-338); (7) Digression on 'Murder will out' (*ll.* 284-291); (8) St. Kenelm (*ll.* 344-355); (9) Scipio's Dream (*ll.* 356-360); (10) Daniel, Joseph, Pharooh (*ll.* 361-369); (11) Croesus and Andromache (*ll.* 370-382); (12) Date of the fatal morning and its astrological significance (*ll.* 421-433); (13) Pertelote's beauty helps to banish from his mind all fears (*ll.* 394-396); (14) the spring day raises Chanticleer to the height of joy on the eve of tragedy (*ll.* 397-443); (15) Introduction of the Fox into the yard like the serpent into Eden (*ll.* 449-457); (16) References to famous traitors—Judas Iscariot, Gauclon, Sinon (*ll.* 461-463); (17) cursing the evil day (*ll.* 464-466); (18) Predestination (*ll.* 478-484); (19) Folly of taking women's advise (*ll.* 490-500); (20) Brief asides on mermaids (*l.* 504); (21) Fox's long speech flattering Chanticleer's father singing in full-throated with eyes shut (*ll.* 518-555); (22) flattery (*ll.* 559-564); (23) Digression on destiny, Venus, a dig at Geoffrey de Vinsant's chiding of 'the Friday' (*ll.* 572-588); (24) classical scenes of women's wailing (*ll.* 589-607).

As in this tale Chaucer makes more literary references

1. Robinson, F. W.; The Nun's Priest's Tale, pp. 13-14.

than in any other part of his works, it will now be worth our while to trace their sources after the manner of Professor Lounsbury in his scholarly standard work.[1]

It may be noted that references to classical legendary characters such as Croesus (*l.* 372), Andromache (*l.* 375), Sinon (*l.* 462), have already been made in some of the tales which preceded the *Nun's Priest's Tale*. Croesus, King of Lydia for instance had been referred to at length in his *monk*'s *tale* presumably written before this Tale. The story seems to have been taken by Chaucer through the commentary on Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* by Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274). The dream of Andromache, wife of Hector of Troy, is not to be found in Homer but it appears in the *Roman de Troye*, written in French, in the twelfth century by Benoit De Saint More. Most probably Chaucer found it in Guido da Colonna's Latin verse of Benoit – the famous Trojan history which was very well-known in European literary circles.

Synoun (*l.* 462) is referred to in the second book of the *Aeneid* ; he persuaded the Trojan to admit the Wooden Horse into their city. In the horse was—with the others—Pyrrhus (*l.* 59), Illion (*l.* 590) was the Trojan citadel. These are mentioned in the *Eneydos* (*l.* 593).

Hasdrubal's death is referred to by St. Jerome (*ll.* 340-420) in her *Treatise against Jovinian*. The discourses on dreams are derived from differnt sources, including Cicero's *De Divinatione* ; the Daun Catoun (*l.* 174) is not either of the Catos famous in Roman history but one Dionysius Cato, of whom nothing is known except his authorship of *De Moribus*. This volume, dealing with manners and full of proverbial philosophy, was used as a school book in the Middle Ages.

Mecrobius (fifth century), author of a commentary on

1. Lounsbury : Studies in Chaucer, pp. 66-75.

Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, was a favourite with Chaucer and is mentioned in his other poems. Chanticleer quotes his authority in *ll.* 357-360. In his *House of Fame* Chaucer describes how Scipio appeared to him in a dream, and took him into a walled garden on St. Valentine's Day.[1]

Boethius (*ll.* 470-524) has already been referred to. There is a direct reference to his *De Musica* and to his views on freewill, as expressed in *De Consolatione Philosophiae* in line 528. "Dreams, matrimony, and predestination are three of the great Chaucerian themes and in *Nun's Priest's Tale*, they reappear in a new variation with learning in their train, both philosophical, medical and literary."[2] Augustine (*l.* 475), Bishop of Hippo (*ll.* 354-430), had dealt with the question in *De Civilate Dei*; Bishop Bradwardine, who is also mentioned in this connection, was author of *De Causa Dei*. He was Archbishop of Canterbury in 1349.

Among other theological writers are Florence of Worcester, from whose works, or from those of Matthew of Westminster, or Roger of Wendover, Chaucer derived the story of Kenelm of Mercia; Vincent of Beauvais, from whose *Speculum Historiale* a compilation of Bible stories and secular fables, from which Chaucer may have derived the sentiment expressed in *l.* 440. The reference to Daun Buruel the Asse (*l.* 546) indicates Chaucer's knowledge of a Latin poem, *Speculum Stultorum* by Nigel Wireker, monk and precentor of Canterbury (c. 1200). *Phisiologus*, mentioned in *l.* 505, is a book, not a person; it is one of the many "bestiaries", collections of more or less fabulous stories of animals, popular in the Middle Ages. The name of the author is not certain being given as Theobald or Thetbald. He also was probably a monk.

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1. vide Coghill, N.; The Poet Chaucer for a Detailed Reference, p. 56.
2. Op. cit., p. 154.

The *Lancelot de Lake* (*l.* 446), is probably that in French attributed to Walter Map or Mapes (c. 1200). There is a reference to the Charlemagne legend in *l*. 461 ; Genyloun was responsible for the final disaster in Roncevaun leading to the death of Roland.

Gaufred de Vinsauf, called "Deere Maister Soverayn" in sarcasm, wrote a long Latin poem on the subject of verse composition, and included therein a eulogy of Richard I and a condemnation of Friday, the day on which the king was mortally wounded. The cock's misfortune is attributed to the evil day of Venus (*ll*. 576-588). "The comic use of rhetoric and learning are among the ingredients of this tale at which every reader laughs, whether he knows of medieval medicine and rhetoric, of Dioscorides and 'Gaufred deere maister soverayn', or not, Gaufred de Vinsauf, author of the *Nova Patria*, put here to such loving and preposterous use by Chaucer."[1]

There are clear evidences of Chaucer's familiarity with the Bible in the Vulgate version. Among the authorities on dreams, Chaucer refers to the Biblical characters of Daniel and Joseph, and their belief in the significance of dreams (*ll*. 362-63). He speaks also of the Apocryphal book of *Ecclesiasticus* (*l. 563*), and its teaching in flattery : "Though (thine enemy) humble himself, and go crouching, yet take good heed, and beware of him, and thou shalt be unto him as one that hath wiped a mirror, and thou shalt know that he hath not utterly rusted it...... ...And the enemy will speak sweetly with his lips, and in his heart take counsel how to overthrow thee into a pit." (Chapter X, verses 10, 11 and 16). "No book except the Bible was more continually present to his imagination than the *Roman de la Rose*."[2]

Chaucer mentions Judas Iscariot in his list of traitors (*l*. 461), and quotes St. Paul's words on the subject of

1. vide Coghill, N. : The Poet Chaucer, p. 156.
2. Op. cit., p. 10.

taking warning from what one reads (2. Timothy, iii. 16).

The standard study of the sources of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* is by Miss K. O. Peterson, of Radcliffe College, U. S. A.; published in 1898, by Ginn & Co. (R. C. Monographs, No. 10). Chaucerian scholars should do well to read this excellent piece of research work.

Miss Peterson tells us that the following additions are due to Chaucer's *invention* :

(a) *ll.* 439-444, 458-500, 569-564, 572-574, 636-638, 670-688, which are in the nature of a *medieval homily*, and amount to 72 lines in all ;

(b) *ll.* 155-340, which is the portion dealing with dreams ;

(c) *ll.* 84-111, 391-404, 407-418, 421-438, 501-515, which are *pseudo-heroic* in character and come up to 92 lines :

(d) six lines from the common stock of the medieval romance writer, namely, *ll.* 420, 445-448 and 608 ;

(e) miscellaneous additions (22 lines), *viz.*, *ll.* 546-553, 575-588. These make 428 lines of Chaucer's own provision, which added to the 198 lines derived from the Roman de Renart, give the total of 626 lines in all. "For the tale of the Nun's Priest, Chaucer apparently selected a narrative which would have been within the range of the Priest's professional reading........ The fundamental material is to be sought in the Chanticleer episode of the *Renart* epic. But the perfection of dramatic power which the *Nun's Priest's Tale* exhibits, the dignity of its characters, its conversations, and the humour which pervades it, are Chaucer's own."[1] From the

1. Peterson, K. O. : On the Sources of the Nonne Prestes Tale, p. 41 (Boston, Ginn & Co.)

above the intelligent student will have some idea of Chaucer's library from which he makes the above literary references. As Coghill says, "I have counted over *four-and-twenty learned allusions to different authors* in this farm-yard story, and one might almost say that Chaucer's source for it was not the *Roman de Renart* so much as a life-time of delighted reading and natural observation."[1]

(b) Chaucer's Treatment of the Sources

It will be seen also from the above that there is hardly a single important circumstance in the story which may be said to be the invention of the poet and yet there can hardly be a more marked instance of his originality thant this tale, which is admittedly one of the best of the Canterbury Tales. It is the originality of the treatment of the sources of his tale for purposes of his narrative art that infuses into the lifeless skeleton the vigour, unity and the vivifying breath of life. Although he did not invent the plot in its essential parts, all that gives attractiveness to the tale is furnished by Chaucer himself. The main threads of the tale are just as he found them; it is the way the story is told, punctuated by a maze of irrelevances, digressions and literary allusions to different authors, that impart to the poem its peculiar charm. "The vivid pictures of contemporary life, the learned discourses and discussions put in the mouth of the cock and the hen, the pointed satirical touches, glancing at almost every profession and almost every social class, the humorous atmosphere that envelops the action of the piece as well as the speeches of the authors—all these were things that could not be borrowed because outside of the poet's own creation, they never had an existence in connection with this tale."[2]

1. Coghill, N. : The Poet Chaucer, p. 156.
2. Lounsubry ; Studies in Chaucer, p. 66.

Chaucer used the tale to characterise the tellers *i. e.* to say he chose for each a story suited to the class and character. "The story-tellers do not merely exist to tell the stories but the stories exist to tell us something about the story-tellers."[1] In an age when the majority of the poets wandered in the dreamland of allegory and romance the Nun's Priest thus comes to life through the story of the cock and the fox he tells and well does he fit into the entourage of a Prioress so fond of animals. If any one tale could be picked up from the Canterbury Tales for showing the quintessence of Chaucer's wit, gaiety and learning, surely *The Nun's Priest's Tale* would be a fair choice.[2]

One of the marked characteristics of Chaucer's narrative power, illustrative of The *Nun's Priest's Tale* as of his earliest works, is his genius for controlled and wise digressions and divergences from the main track. "He can add a sudden philosophical depth to any story by an impulse to ponder what it is that makes things fall out the way they do. He cannot tell so much as the story of the farm-yard fox without invoking predestination.[3] These digressions and delayings are but masterly ingredients that set the tone, stay the denouements, heighten expectation and sharpen the main point of the tale."[4] Chaucer's power of controlled digression and sense of universal things illuminate and deepen many of his narratives, while seeming to delay the story-telling. There is no evidence to prove that Chaucer was indebted to his immediate source (*Roman de Renart*) for these digressions and diversions which are definitely his own contribution to the story. Chaucer's treatment is best illustrated in the scurrying scene which turns a peaceful farm-yard into a pandemonium when he deliberately holds

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1. Chesterton, G. K. : Chaucer, p. 111.
2. Coghill, N. : The Poet Chaucer, p. 154.
3. Coghill, N. :-The Poet Chaucer, p. 130.
4. Op. cit., 149.

back this scene, approaching it as slowly and indirectly as his audience will permit. For he is both entertaining them and at the same time teasing them with suspense and irrelevance. "He keeps an eye on them all the time, gauging to a nicety how far he can go without spoiling their pleasure, cajoling them with a promise[1] or muffling a protest by protesting first.[2] But when once the chase is started, his burst of space is all the more effective by contrast."[3] Digressions and divergences were one of the vices of narrative poetry in the age of Chaucer but the great merit of Chaucer was that he used this technique with masterly restraint. It is with devices such as these that he has succeeded in enriching his story with humour, wit, learning and philosophy.

Before Chaucer's time, the accepted approach of poetry to figurative instruction through allegory was through a dream. Allegory was the dominant habit of poetic thought in the Middle Ages. Four of Chaucer's own earlier poems took this road into the imaginative world. Dreams are also introduced in his later poetry : "dreams feigned, so as to start a poem : allegorical dreams such as Criseyde had, to show the state of her feelings : dreams that come of indigestion and prophetic dreams that seem to involve a theory of predestination, all were to return again and again in his writing. Poetry, psychology, medicine, and theology had so much to say of them, and these were sciences in which Chaucer was well versed[4]......As for us, so for Chaucer, dreams were a matter for scientific and philosophical inquiry, whether they were the dreams of poets or of lovers or of humours of the blood, dreams of the soul or belly, dreams that were no more than a rag-bag of past impressions and dreams that, being true visions of the future, had meta-

1. But I wol passe as lightly as I kan.
2. I wol nat han to do of swich mateere.
3. K. Sisam : The Nun's Priest's Tale, p. xxx.
4. Coghill, N. ; The Poet Chaucer, p. 27.

physical importance since they seemed to establish that the future was in some way already fixed. This thought involves some degree of predestination and therefore, as Chaucer perceived, qualifies theories of the freedom of the will.[1] Dreams, matrimony and predestnation are three of the great Chaucerian themes and here, in *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, they reappear in a new variation, with learning in their train, both philosophical, medical and literary"[2].

Most of the digressions in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* are among the chief beauties of this enchanting tale *e. g.*, the digressions on a woman's consel (*l.* 490), Destiny (*l.* 572), rules of rhetoric (*l.* 490) etc. "The comic use of rhetoric and learning are among the ingredients of these tales at which every reader laughs whether he knows of medieval medicine, and rhetoric, of Dioscorides and 'Gaufred, dere maister soverayn' or not, Gaufred de Vinsauf, author of the *Nova Poetria*, put here to such loving and preposterous use by Chaucer."[3] The cock's tragic adventure is presented here against "a background of universal history and divine providence. In the discussion on dreams and destiny, the Priest draws upon the sermon books, which are great treasure-houses of medieval fiction. The catastrophe..................is related in the grand style, making the poem the first notable English example of mock-heroic".[4] As part of his plan to make the tale suit the teller, Chaucer perhaps cast the narrative in the form of a sermon. The discussions of dreams, of free will or necessity, evil influence of women, flattery, homicide, earthly joy, the fickle character of the distribution of fortune's gifts, the appeal to "auctours" (authors) and last of all the conclusion of the story with a moral—

1. Op. cit., 49.
2. Op. cit., p. 154.
3. Op. cit., p. 156.
4. Robinson, F. N.: Works of Chaucer, pp. 13-14.

all these are of the nature and manner of a homily and sermon.

(c) Appreciation of the Mock-heroic Epic

The subject itself—the tale of a cock and a fox, is basically whimsical. It is to be noticed that both Chanticleer and Pertelote function in the tale as fowls and humans. Chaucer has invested them with human interest. Even a cock and a hen, which Chaucer had found plain cock and hen, have become without for a moment ceasing to be fawls, vivaciously and captivatingly human. Notice how humanly he describes them in 'The *Nun's Priest's Tale* :

"Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
Herkneth thise blisful briddes how they synge,
And se the fresshe floures how they sprynge".
(*ll*. 434-7)

It is the whimsicality of his subject which demanded all the subtlety of his creative art *viz*., he had to maintain a nice and delicate balance between the natural characteristics of animals and their human qualities because on the conflict and blending of these two elements a lot of humour depend "Where the whole machinery of mock-heroic treatments would be too artificial, and the simple story of a farm-yard incident too plain, he had to combine the interests of both............Chaucer had also to guard against the temptation of falling into serious satire which would break the fantasy. He succeeded where so many failed by serene good temper, geniality, humanism as well as art, and it is this that makes *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, the favourite of most readers of the *Canterbury Tales*".[1]

The Nun's Priest's Tale is a burlesque or literary parody of heroic-style. The true genius of a mock-heroic epic poem lies in imitating all the serious epic characters and conventions. "An epic poem is a long tale in verse

1. Sisam, K. : The Nun's Priest's Tale, p. xxiii.

with famous heroes for its principal characters"[1] written in "the grand style" *i. e.*, in noble and exalted language as befits the words and deeds of gods, heroes and their exploits pointing to a moral. The conventions are 'invocations to the Muse', Homeric epithet, the Homeric simile etc. Italy and France were first in the field of the mock-epic which is a parody of the epic form. In a mock-heroic epic a subject which is considered unworthy of the serious epic is clothed in all traditional paraphernalia and solemn dignity of the epic form. A notable instance of an English mock-heroic epic is Pope's *Rape of the Lock* which has for its subject—the theft of a lock of hair from a girl's head—dealt with in the epic manner.

Chaucer also employs all the leading conventions of the epic form such as, lofty incident, character, and style to the exaltation of a trivial subject—a petty basically Æsopean animal fable, with a moral tagged on to it. Admittedly, *The Nun's Priest's Tale* is the first and outstanding mock-heroic poem in English literature. Chaucer has admirably transformed the fabliau into a veritable comedy by virtue of his genial humour allied to a spirit of detachment, humanism and tolerance. He describes the follies, foibles, inadequacies and absurdities of his characters in that spirit, like Shakespeare. He has invested the whole tale of the cock and the fox with alternate and mingled feelings of humour, fun and frolic on the one hand and epic grandeur and sublimity on the other in such a way that it is often difficult for us to find out just where he is wholly in earnest and where he is in fun. The jest lies in the resulting incongruity between the theme and its treatment *viz.*, the rendering of a mere tale of a cock and a fox in terms of the sublime with the result that the little has been made great.

Some typical examples in which the mock-heroic note

1. Hudson, W. H.; An Introduction to the Study of Literature.

is struck may now be considered in somewhat greater detail—

(1) The cottage of the poor widow consisting of two rooms without any chimney is spoken of with humorous exaggeration as the only inner rooms and the hall she has (*l.* 66).

(2) Chaucer gives the appellation of Sir Chanticleer to the hero—the accomplished cock with a beard and a shirt to represent him as an ideal hero of true epical parts. Likewise, the hen is also called Madam Pertelote and the fox Daun Russell as the villain of the piece.

(3) The cock's nails are spoken of as "whiter than the lily flower"—another humorous exaggeration (*l.* 97).

(4) Chaucer coins the expression 'gentil cok' (gentle cock) after the term 'gentleman' to produce a mock-heroic effect (*l.* 99). He represents the cock and the hen as no mere cock and hen but as a gentleman and lady and her bright singing an old English song 'in sweete accord.' By this device, Chaucer ascribes to animals human attributes throughout the story so as to extract the maximum of fun out of it.

(5) Boldness, wisdom and freedom are three of the desirable qualities of lovers required in the courts of Love. In *l.* 147, Pertelote says of her husband (the cock), "We all desire our husbands to be bold, wise and free".

(6) In *l.* 196, the 'wormes' prescribed by Pertelote to the ailing Chanticleer are not simply "a remedy to fit a fowl, but the actual medicine recommended by Dioscorides for the human ailment of a tertian ague, from which, she claims, he is suffering. Chaucer's jokes often grow richer as one looks at them."[1]

(7) The cock is compared to an astronomer and is credited with a knowledge of it while his crowing is compared to the sound of church-bells. Chaucer wants

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1. Coghill, N., The Poet Chaucer, p. 155.

us to believe that such accuracy of astronomical knowledge is beyond the reach of common people. The cock also observes something clock-like punctuality in his crowing at stated hours. (*l* 85). He struts among his seven pet hens in the farm-yard 'royal as a prince in a hall'. He has a keen sense of beauty in things around him. Like a romantic lover, he is attracted by the beautiful face of his wife. (*l*. 392.) He can appreciate Nature's beauty and joy in Nature very early in the morning when the sun climbs up in the sky 'forty degrees and one'. (*l*. 434.) The morning is described here in epic terms. Except for one tragic trait (for which he is beguiled by the sly fox) he is credited with all the qualities of an epic hero. Even his vanity is exhibited by him in his attempt to prove himself a worthy son of his father. Thus, at no stage does he forfeit the sympathy of readers of the story. Chaucer emphasises his pluck, cleverness, dexterity and resourcefulness at the hour of danger in lines of rolling eloquence and yet the irony of the whole thing lies, as Chaucer points out from time to time while telling the story that he is no better than a mere cock.

(8) Likewise Madam Pertelote (the hen) is painted by Chaucer as the ideal lady and wife who considers dreams from a common-sense point of view *viz*., that they occur as the natural consequence of overeating, for which she perscribes the 'wormes' with her uptodate knowledge of laxatives.

(9) The fox, Daun Russell, 'full of sly inequity' is the typical villain whom Chaucer compares to Ganelon, Judas Iscariot and the Greek who betrayed Troy to its doom. Like all human villains he is credited with his power of flattery, sharp intelligence and cunningness though he is tempted by fortune to commit the one error which foils his scheme. Thus, the ethical design Chaucer had in mind, is fulfilled, as the good triumphs and the evil goes away crestfallen. The hero, suffering temporarily for his one tragic trait, is restored to his happiness and virtue is

rewarded. "All art to be truly great, must be moralised—must be in harmony with those principles of conduct, that tone of feeling, which it is the self-preservative instinct of civilised humanity to strengthen."[1] Artists who aspire to greatness, can never be indifferent to ethics. Here is another ascription of human quality to the feathered creation. Chaucer has, however, eminently succeeded in throwing a veil over his didactic purpose behind a fable of beasts.

(10) The same mock-heroic character of the poem is maintained in serio-comic treatment of the two main characters as well as in the witty conversations and descriptions, the pompous orations of the cock on the psycho-analytic problem of dreams and Chaucer's favourite topics of free will, fate, fortune, fore-knowledge, freedom of will and predestination, denunciation of women as the destroyer of paradise and lastly, the brilliant mock-heroic account of the farm-yard chase turning the peaceful farm-yard into a pandemonium which a critic has likened to "a moral confusion following the fall of Man."

Chaucer has thus succeeded in keeping a delicate and "nice balance between the natural characters of the animals and their human attributes, for on the clash and blending of these much of the humour depends."

8. Detailed Study of Chaucer

(a) As a Poet of Nature and Man

Chaucer is pre-eminently a poet of nature and man He was deeply interested in his fellow-men—all types of human beings, good as well as bad and his interest in humanity is characterised by his wide sympathy for all sorts and conditions of people. In his *Canterbury Tales* and the immortal *Prologue* he painted the characters of his fellow-pilgrims, who were fairly comprehensive and

1. Symonds, J. A.: Quoted by Hudson, W. H.: Introduction to the Study of Literature, p. 170.

representative of the age, though limited to what we may broadly call the middle classes. He invented the framework of the tales and provided it with links between the tales with infinite resource of incident and conversation. Of all the character-writers in English literature from the earliest times to Wordsworth, there is none so great as Chaucer. The very humours and manners of the whole English nation figure in his page. He was essentially a humanist and a convinced believer in the dignity of man. He maintained a spirit of detachment—an impersonal and objective attitude while describing them. He effaced himself completely and assumed the role of a mere chronicler—an onlooker and often an interpreter. His pilgrims are not merely typical of their callings and professions but they are also individuals. He invariably added individual to generic features in presenting this picture-gallery of fourteenth century England.

He seems to be particularly sensitive to the resurgence of life in spring. He brings in all the colour and variety of Nature's beauty in early spring while describing the assembly of pilgrims at the Tabard Inn in his *Prologue*. In *The Nun's Priest's Tale* his Chanticleer has a keen sense of appreciation of the beauties of Nature and is infected with the great joy that prevails in the world of Nature early in the morning when the birds break into song.

(d) His humour

All his later works, specially the *Prologue* and *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, are full of examples of his subtle humour, the very essence of which is a spirit of detachment, allied to his humanism. His is an indulgent comic outlook in men and things. He brings the light of his indulgent smile to play on the follies and foibles of his characters. Though he holds the mirror up to the life of his time, he never paints the dark underside of the lives

of the poor people of his age. "It is significant that his only mention of the peasants' revolt is in the form of a humorous reference in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* of the cock and the fox."[1] His humour is not an extraneous quality but it is definitely his way of thinking—a habit of his mind and his characteristic attitude to life, born out of the somewhat detached but nonetheless delightful interest he took in all specimens of humanity. His humour is always harmless and genial and not of the satirical kind which hurts and destroys. He never lashes the follies and foibles of human nature as vices and, as such, the laughter with which he infects us, is definitely not the laughter of disdain or malice, but the subtle, silent laughter, born out of the recognition of human frailties.

Humour in The Nun's Priest's Tale

In his *The Nun's Priest's Tale* he reaches his most humorous point. The whole conception is humorous, for a huge, red-faced priest with his big burly figure tells the tale of a cock and his hens, while the cock as if out of compliment to the priest, tries his experiment at a sermon pointing to a moral. In the first place, the humour lies in the incongruity between the theme and its treatment in the grand mock-heroic style between a cock and his hen, functioning both as fowls and as humans. Besides, the whole story is one in which the hero, the heroine and the traditional villain of the piece are a cock, a hen, and a fox, while the human beings in the scene *i. e.*, the poor widow and her two daughters are merely in the background or just quoted as authorities by the hero to press home his arguments."[2]

There is humour also in the detailed description of the characters. There is, for instance, kindly humour in the description of the poor widow and her disabilities, in

1. Hudson, W. H. : An Outline History of English Literature, p. 25.
2. Robinson, F. W. ; The Nun's Priest's Tale, p. 18.

which the humble lot of the lowly and the poor is shown to be superior to that of the wealthy courtier, highly placed in the social scale. The richest humour of the tale lies in the pompous and mock-heroic description of Chanticleer who seems to be a burlesque and a parody of some medieval lord personally known to the poet. All sorts of attributes of the typical knight and courtly lover have been lavished on the hero. But he suffers from defects, like his human counterpart. He is easily upset by an unpleasant trifle like a dream. Besides, he has another tragic trait in him for which he suffers at the hands of the fox. This is his vanity. He has devoted a lot of his leisure to the reading of the classics. So he quotes from Cicero, a knock-down argument to refute his wife's reliance on Cato. He is also credited with all the medieval legendary knowledge possessed by courtiers of Chaucer's time and his Biblical knowledge is of no mean order. His speeches are full of opposite quotations from Daniel and the earlier Old Testament stories. He is peculiarly susceptible to flattery and vain display. Fortunately, for him, he has the wit to rectify his mistakes before it is too late and is able to return to his 'harem' possibly with as great dignity as before.

In sharp contrast to this eloquent, somewhat garrulous braggart of a husband stands his ideal wife. Dame Pertelote, a sensible middle-class woman who takes the common-sense view of dreams being caused by over-eating and indigestion and smiles at this petty failing of her illustrious husband, the cock. "Like a good dame of the house, who has a 'knowledge of simples', she prescribes a common-sense regimen for her ailing husband, who, however pooh-poohs her suggestions, as indeed so bold a swaggerer as Chanticleer should."[1] The discussion of dreams is of modern interest today and is one of the crazes of society of all ranks owing to the revelations

1. Robinson, P. W.: The Nun's Priest's Tale, p. 19.

made by the psycho-analytic school of Zurich and Vienna. The jargon of the psycho-analyst was unknown to Chanticleer, but the cock had studies and could quote the dream literature current in Chaucer's time."[1]

It is quite in the fitness of things that Daun Russell should have all the traits of the human villains as against the traits of a typical fox, with all his wiliness and power of flattery—susceptibility to which was the predominant defect in the character of Chanticleer—"the one point in the cock's armour where his shaft could penetrate and he was shrewd enough to pierce it there."[2]

Chanticleer's playful attitude towards his wife is illustrated in his translation of "Mulier hominis confusio" as "Woman is man's joys and all his bliss". Perhaps Chaucer wanted to hit at the scanty education of women in his age. The merry comparisons by the Priest of the cock's voice with the sweet silvery sound of the church-bell or organ of his early crowing with the abbey clock and of the cock's wattte with the machi-colated castle wall—illustrate the humour of incongruity which is also seen in the cock's having not only a beard, but also a shirt.

(c) Realism, Characterisation, Originality of His Genius Personality and Estimate.

There can be no question that Chaucer is not only the first great English humorist but also the first painter and creator of human characters in English literature. He discarided his French and Italian models based on romances, fantasies and dreams on which he had worked so long and then entered on his real job—transcription of reality in daily life, as it was being actually lived in his own day in all its variety. To this end, he chose characters who would not only be types but also i-----

1. Op. cit., p. 16.
2. Op. cit., p. 19.

duals with characteristics clearly marked out of the rest. His subject was no less than the presentation with minute exactness the body and soul of human society of his time. His plot is made up of the events illustrating the chosen theme, fitted in a framework of his own invention. The setting is the age in which he lived and the characters are the people who move in the plot. For the story to be alive, the characters must live for us, we must hang on their experiences and be anxious to know what is going to happen to them next. The setting of the *Canterbury Tales* is also highly realistic. . Pilgrimages were one of the most common sights in the fourteenth century England. So the picture Chaucer presents in the *Tales* in not of an imaginary world but of the real world of men and women of his age, described minutely with humours, their features and their very dress.

"The Tabard Inn, from which his pilgrims set out, actually existed in the sixteenth century and is set down in 1598 by London's first chronicler, John Stow. It probably was there in Chaucer's time, and Harry Bailey, the host. was very likely the same man who represented Southwark in Parliament in 1376-77 and in 1378-89...... the Reeve, named Oswald, of Bawdes-well in Norfolk, seems to have been a real person... It has been suggested that the Franklin, who was his friend was perhaps Sir John Bussy, who figures in Shakespeare's *Richard II* and was put to death by Henry IV ...It is also probable that the shipman was a real character, John Hawley, a well-known West County semi-pirate from Dartmouth ......We seem to see a real portrait in this bold-faced woman (the much-married Wife of Bath) with bright ruddy complexion. The adventures of the Wife of Bath suggest that she was a real person, whom Chaucer had met and whose character he has analysed with consummate skill."[1]

1. Brett James, N. G.: Introducing Chaucer, pp. 94-96.

Chaucer, no doubt, had many living models to draw upon for many of his characters. But the *realism* of Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales* should not give us the impression that whatever has been described by him is *real* in the sense of *Photographic fidelity*. Realism must not be confused and interpreted as identical with reality, for it is a collective term for certain devices that give the effect of reality and truth In order to describe things and persons in their truth and reality, Chaucer had to depend on his narrative art and realistic art *i. e.*, the resources of language, the power of narration, delicacy of perception, sense of proportion and balance, insight, observation, selection of universal aspects and eternal verities of human nature, even distribution of light and shade etc. Going direct to Nature and to actual life and reproducing what you find there with photographic reality, is the method of seience and not of art. The theory of realism which the artist should never venture beyond *actual fact* is to be rejected as it involves the old controversy between *scientific* and *poetic truth*. "Art cannot without self-destruction adopt the aims and borrow the methods of science. The artist's work, as Goethe admirably says, "is real in so far as it is always true ; ideal, in that it is never actual."[1] Realism cannot be divorced from art ; nor can art be divorced from the realities of life. In this sense, Chaucer was admittedly the first to create living human characters in English literature by realism. An artist, when dealing with everyday life must, therefore, modify, suppress, emphasise, exaggerate, invent and even idealise his portraits to produce the *illusion of reality* in his characters so that they may remain true for all ages.

Chaucer's realism is thus fundamentally different from the type of realism advocated by a school of novelists who think that the ugly facts of life should be represented

1. Hudson, W. H. : An Introduction to the Study of Literature, p. 167.

in art just as they are found in the work-a-day world sacrificing what we call artistic delicacy and finesse. This perverted sense of so called realism or *naturalism* would seem to justify detailed pictures of the sordid, base, and ugly—pictures which, while they may be painfully accurate in their presentation of selected particulars, are so completely out of perspective that they are anything but true to life at large". If anything, this is only crass realism, repugnant to a true sense of artistic delicacy. "Chaucer describes the ugly things about the medieval Church, about the Wife of Bath, the Miller, the Manciple and the Reeve, but there in an artistic grace about it. To make the ugly things appear more ugly and detestable—this is not the aim of Chaucer. Nor does he think the ugly things of life mean all that life is. Chaucer makes allowances for human errrors and frailties. Art cannot renounce its true function when it has got to deal with the dirt and squalor of life..............He has not debased art, and all that he paints of evil in life has an artistic value and also the value of sober truth. For the sake of art, he does not falsify things. And it is a realism different from the crass realism which is rampant among us today".[1]

As contrasted with pale shadowy figures and abstractions of the medieval metrical romances, Chaucer has created living human figures—a veritable parliament of social and industrial England, representative of all classes —chivalry, church, professional men, trade, commerce, agriculture etc.—with their individual traits cleverly combined in typical traits. While individualising the characters, he has not lost sight of the basic, enduring, permanent and *universal* characteristics and attributes of the class. "Chaucer's characters are thus individuals as well as types, not mere phantoms of the brain but real human beings and types true to the likeness of whole classes of men and women"[2]. His narrative art lies in striking the

1. Hudson, W. H. : An Introduction to the Study of Literature, p. 167.
Ward, A. C. : Chaucer, p. 63.

delicate balance between the individual and the typical. We behold in each character as it is presented to us not only the individual, but the typical—the permanent and essential human attributes of the class also—the eternal verities of human nature that remain true for all time. This is how Chaucer has imparted to each something of universality. Indeed, this method of portraying characters by exhibiting the universal in the particular while differentiating them by means of their easiest and most obvious distinctions and differences in clothes, manner of speech, habits, humours etc., is an unprecedented innovation which proves Chaucer's original genius.

It is the characteristic of genius to have a profound insight into the real and the actual, to face them boldly and then by virtue of his art, his sense of realism to reproduce them under appropriate forms. His initial poetical life can be compared to a journey from the ivory towers and high-walled gardens of medieval French literature into the humanism of the early Italian renaissance and, last of all, into the very heart of English domestic life,—a continuous progress from fantasy to actuality. Neither in French nor in Italian nor in his own language did he have any literary models to work by. All that he had before, he embarked on the *Canterbury Tales* in the way of portraits which were unreal and shadowy abstractions in metrical romances. Here, then, was a man whose sympathies were as broad, tolerant and large as the nature of man, "a soul that could not endure a dead form or a mere conventionality and an intellect which arranged the human beings around him according to their intrinsic qualities—by what they were rather than by what they were called." The concrete life of humanity in flesh and blood had a greater appeal to Chaucer than the artificial hot-house atmosphere of the courtly world represented in the medieval romances. One of the qualities that give his characters their amazing vitality and realism, is his humour. He was amused by the comedy of daily life or

touched by pathos or moved by romantic sentiment but he did not like to depict the dark underside of the life of the people, for he was essentially a court-poet who catered to the cultivated and refined taste of the middle-class society of his times. The characteristic note of all his works is that of frank pleasure in the good things of life. In his *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer created his first comedian in his Pandarus which was his first creation of a piece of actuality with no model before him except that of life itself. Pandarus is the central figure in a tragedy of young love. *Troilus and Criseyde* was thus the first creation of tragi-comedy. Usually, we associate a tragi-comedy with the name of Shakespeare but we tend to forget that it was Chaucer who first discovered it.

Chaucer's interest in all types of human beings, good and bad, his enthusiasm for life, for the society of his fellowmen high and low, for real men and women, his outlook and his attitude towards iife, marked by tolerance, charity and sympathy for all, were all fundamentally different from those of his contemporaries. His humanism, as we have seen, placed him in a close personal relation towards the personages and events of his times. He had no religious or moral dogma to preach, no desire to preach to or satirise his follow-beings for falling far short of his ideals. That is why we find churchmen represented by him without bitterness, although there may be a satirical touch in his portaiture of some of them but it is no more than that. His capacity for joyous observation of life was unbounded. "He had always taken joy in the created world, a joy tinged with quizzicial wonder. The simplicity of his delight in things for being what they were was qualified by an acute and questioning intelligence, and this in turn qualified by a gravely comic personal humility. So bland, so unself-conscious, so mild a spectator of God's plenty could be simple without *naivete*, romantic without foolishness, ironical without cruelty. He seems omnivorous and yet a dainty feeder. The

freshness of his gaze is like that of a man who can see what is familiar to him without losing the vividness of a child's vision. Nothing is blurred, every colour is as true as in heraldry or in a primitive painting. His eye, 'gliding the object whereupon it gazeth', at the same time perceives with a perfectly mature intelligence deeply pleased, amused, and upon occasion touched...............It was the April of the world, to him no cruel month."[1] The laughter with which he infects us is not the laughter of disdain or malice but the subtle and silent laughter of a comedian, born out of a tacit recognition of human frailities. This is because Chaucer had a serene and cheerful frame of mind, of unruffled serenity and of good-natured satire.

His great zest for actual llfe showed itself not only in the plenty and variety of his pilgrims in the *Tales* but specially in their normality. They are all drawn from the best of raw material of 'clay taken from common earth'. Consequently, Chaucer drew real men and women—not mere shadowy abstractions, neither monstrous, grotesque or angelic beings. "He had not exaggerated or looked for freaks, he delighted in the world as he found it...........Chaucer's delight in normality is what chiefly differensiates him from Dickens, with whom he has so he has so often been compared."[2] Unlike Dickens, who is a master of the eccentric, and draws characters which are monsters of inequity, paragons of pathos, of optimism, cunning, meanness, benevolence, Chaucer takes delight in depicting human beings. That is why the Canterbury pilgrims, since the day when they first rode from the Tabard Inn, have never ceased to live with a full and intelligible life. Only the Wife of Bath seems larger and louder than life but her case is an exception. He was no satirist and his humour is always genial and sympathetic, except of course in his handling of the Monk

1. Coghill, N. : The Poet Chaucer, pp. 118-119.
2. Op. cit., p. 121.

and the Friar but even then there is no sting in it. "He does not treat with disdain those whose foolishness he has fathomed, nor does he turn away in disgust from the rascal whose tricks he has detected."[1] He is not also a novelist and his aim in telling his tales is never didactic. Neither was he a reformer. "His was an easy-going, genial, tolerant nature, and nothing of the reformer went to his composition."[2]

Realism in The Nun's Priest's Tale

In his first great mock-heroic poem *i. e. The Nun's Priest'e Tale*—the greatest parody in English literature—Chaucer's realism is well-illustrated in the theee characters, the hero (Chanticleer), the heroine (Pertelote), and the villain (the Fox Daun Russell), to whom human qualities are attributed. The hero, Sir Chanticleer is represented as a hero of true epical characters, like a knight of the Middle Ages, combinining in himself all those qualities that go to make him as ideal husband for his ideal wife (Madam Pertelote) such culture, courage, nobility, intelligence etc., with but one lapse—the tragic trait of vanity and susceptibility to flattery for which he is beguiled by the villain of the piece (Daun Russell). The heroine (Madam Pertelote) is the type of the sensible, unimaginative, middle-class woman with a common-sense view of life, which she represents and so is the fox (Daun Russell)—possessing the usual traits of a typical villain with his slyness, wiliness and power of flattery." Instead of piling up before us a vast assortment of details, Chaucer's method is that of assuming the common characteristics of what he is describing and of adding the peculiarities he desires to emphasise. In his original, however, there is no attempt at the realism which Chaucer has shown here. There is a

1. Legouis : Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 61.
2. Hudson, W. H. : An Outline History of English Literature, p. 25.

cottage in the *Roman de Renart*, but it is not described, the whole story, as told in the French version, lacks the verse of the *Nonnes Preestes Tale.* The common-sense unimaginative Dame Pertelote, with her pharmacopoeia is a very realistic figure—once one has granted that a hen could be placed as is our heroine.[1]

Perhaps it was Chaucer's aim to convey through the medium of this mock-heroic epic certain central truths about human nature and some glimpses of the medieval community, its value and something of the way life was carried on it. The widow represents, as do the parson and the plowman in the *Canterbury Tales,* a simplicity and a goodness which were a standard in the medieval community. "She represents also the plain human life which exists underneath the graces and trappings of cultivated life. and beside which man's attitude to life must be set.........Chanticleer and his wives are set in the midst of this, not only by way of visual and comic contrast but morally and in such a way as to give the poem more depth than is allowed by saying that it has a moral ....Contrasted with Pertelote's 'hertes suffisaunce'. His achievements are of voice, dignified appearence, 'knowledge' and social grace. ...... The strength of *The Nun's Priest's Tale* lies in Chaucer's individual development from the tradition of homiletic stories of the Middle Ages".[2]

"In making a *general estimate of Chaucer*, one cannot but admit that he stands in much the same relation to the life of his time as Pope does to the earlier phases of the eighteenth century, and Tennyson to the Victorian era ; and his place in English literature is even more important than theirs, for he is the first great English writer to use 'naked words' in English ".[3] There was never a better story-teller. He gives us a microcosm of English life and

1. Robinson. F. W. : The Nun's Priest's Tale, p. 20.
2. Ford, B. : The Age of Chaucer, p. 112.
3. Compton-Rickett : History of English Literature, p. 63.

his portraits are little masterpieces, vivid, contrasted and finished. As a character-painter, he had the unique gift of exhibiting the universal in the particular. "If Chaucer is the father of English poetry he is the grand-father of English novel", says Chesterton. "His stories are faithful to the eternal traits of human character. His stories give readers a far greater insight into the mind and outlook of his times than the writings of Dryden and Pope. Although it cannot be said of him that his genius was also dramatic, it is nevertheless true to say that the spirit of the drama at its best is diffused through the *Canterbury Tales*. Certain dramatic qualities are no doubt present, for instances in the creation of characters representing persons of flesh and blood, revealed dramatically through speech and action. His characters are also shown in circumstances which are dramatically handled and developed *i.e.*, speech and action are adapted to characters and only such incidents of dramatic significance as are designed to exhibit character. It is, however, true that he lacked some of the essential traits of a great dramatist *viz.*, the psychological development of a personality, the impact of incident upon character, the sense of tragic in life, the revelation of an 'inward world' etc. "He is essentially a dramatist; and if his great work does not appear in the conventional dramatic form, it is the accident of the time, and by no means proves a want of power of orginal conception or of artistic skill in the author."[1] His poetry reveals the animation, the freshness, the healthiness and well-balanced stability of his mind. His poetry is a genuine and prepetual source of joy, born of the zest and pleasure in life and is revealed by his well-lit pictures which call up spring, the month of May, flowers, bird and music. Dryden rightly said, "He is a perpetual fountain of good sense". But in our enthusiasm for this aspect of his poetry we must not ignore his limitation. There were certain aspects of life which he either touched lightly

1. Marsh : Origin and History of English Language. p. 33.

or tended to ignore. Being a court-poet, he had his limitation of a courtier. He remains virtually the poet of feudal and middle class society in its outward aspect only. "But for catching the lyrical gusto of the thirteenth century, he had but a little talent, while for handling the majestic themes, the solemn verse of Dante, he had neither the language at hand nor the power to invent it. He is innocent of deep thoughts, high seriousness, of that intensity of feeling, which is considered to be the criterion of high poetry." He had little power of sublime description. He lacked the high seriousness and the grand style of the great classics. "He has nevertheless the poetic truth of substance, the exquisite virtue of style and manner, a truly human point of view, and a genuine power of giving joy and strength, that we cannot but admit that with him the real English poetry is born". He is the grand humorist, for it was humour and spirit of toleration—his philosophy of life—that kept his mind sane and the heart sweet and full of the mild of human kindness. He is really the first national English poet—the first to fix his choice on East Midland English amidst the scene of dialectical confusion and the domination of Norman French. Chaucer's employment of the ten-syllable line in the seven-line stanza for narrative poetry was his own discovery. He proved that English might compete on equal terms with the French which had most distinguished itself in poetry. It was Chaucer who discovered tragi-comedy—a kind of version which we normally associate with the mighty genius of Shakespeare —as already referred to. He rescued poetry for the first time, from the regions of allegory, metaphysics, theology etc., and by his example, showed that the chief business of the poet should be to hold, as it were, the mirror up to nature, as "the proper study of mankind is man".

THE CANTERBURY TALES

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

The Talk on the Road

(The Knight and the Host complain of the Monk's Tale)
'Hoo' quod the Knyght, 'good sire, namoore of this
That ye han seyd[1] is right ynough, y-wis.[2]
And muchel more ; for litel hevynesse
Is right ynough to muche[3] folk I gesse.
I seye, for me, it is a great disese,[4]
Where as men han been in greet welthe and ese,
To heeren[5] of hire sodeyn fal,[6] allas !
And the contrarie is joye and greet solas,
As whan a man hath ben in poure estaat,[7]
And clymbeth up, and wexeth fortunat,
And there abideth in prosperitee :—
Swich thyng is gladson,[8] as it thynketh[9] me,
And of swich thyng were goodly[10] for to telle.

'Ye', quod oure Hoost, 'by Seinte Poules belle
Ye says right sooth ; this Monk he clappeth[11] lowde ;
He spak how "Fortune covered with a clowde"
I noot[12] never what, and als[13] of a "tragedie"
Right now ye herde : and pardee,[14] no remedie
It is for to biwaille, ne[15] compleyne,
That than is doon ;[16] and als, it is a peyne.
As he han seyd, to heere of hevynesse.
Sire Monk namoore of this, so God yow bless
Youre tale anoyeth all this compaignye ;
Swich talkyng is nat worth a boterflye,

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1. Have said. 2. Certainly. 3. Many. 4. Discomfort. 5. Hear. 6. Their sudden fall. 7. Low state. 8. Delightful. 9. Seems. 10. Pooper. 11. Talks. 12. Know not. 13. Also. 14. By God. 15. Nor. 16. Done.

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

The Talk on the Road

The Knight and the Host complain of the Monk's Tale.

"Stop, good sir, no more of this", shouted the Knight to Monk. "What you have said so far is assuredly enough indeed, and much more than enough, for I am sure a little depressing or annoying talk is quite enough for many people. So far as I am concerned, I take a great displeasure in tales of people who have suffered a sudden or unforeseen decline in fortune after having lived a life of great material comfort and prosperity. But, on the other hand, it is a matter of great delight to hear the opposite ; for example, the tale of a man who climbs up the scale of fortune or leaps into fame from humble beginnings and becomes secure in his prosperity, is delightful. Such a story is of the kind which should be told".

The Host (Harry Bailey) confirmed this opinion of the Knight, swearing in the name of St. Paul's Church and its bell, and said, "This Monk talks too loudly. He has spoken of Fortune as being overshadowed and darkened with the shades of misery and affliction and of other things besides as also of "tragedy", which you have heard first now. I declare in the name of God that it is really of no use bewailing or lamenting or grumbling at an unforeseen fall in fortune. What is done is done. Besides, as you have said, it is depressing or painful to listen to a tale which brings in a sense of heaviness or depression to the mind. So, good Sir Monk, do not tell us any more of such things. Your tale is boring to the guests assembled here. Such talk as this is not even worth a butterfly, for it brings in no fun or diversion.

Wherfore, sire Monk or daun[1] Piers by youre name,
I pray yow hertely telle us somewhat elles ;
For sikerly[2] nere clynkyng of youre belles,
That on youre bridel hange on every syde,
By hevene kyng, that for us alle dyde
I sholde er this han fallen doun for sleepe,
Although the slough[3] had never been so deepe.
Thanne[4] hadde your tale al be toold in veyn,
For certeinly, as that thise clerkes[5] seyn,
Where as a man may have noon audience,
Noght helpeth it to tellen his sentence ;[6]
And wel I woot[7] the substance is in me,
If any thyng shal wel reported be.
Sir, sey somewhat of huntyng, I yow preye.'

'Nay', quod this Monk, 'I have no lust to pleye;
Now lat another telle, as I have toold'.

Thanne[8] spak oure Hoost with rude speche and boold,
And seyde unto the Nonnes Preest anon, (B. 3999)
'Com neer, thou preest, com hyder, thou sir John.
Telle us swich thyng as may oure hertes glade[9] ;
Be blithe, though thou ryde upon a jade[10].
What though thyn hors be bothe foul and lene[11] ?
If he wol[12] serve thee, rekke nat[13] a bene.
Looke that thyn herte be murie everemo.'

'Yis sire', quod he, 'yis, Hoost, so moot[14] I go.
But I be myrie, y-wis I wol be blamed,'
And right anon his tale he hath attamed[15].
And thus he seyde unto us everichon'[16]
This sweete preest, this goodly man, Sir John

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1. Sir. 2. Certainly. 3. Mud, 4. Then. 5. Learned men. 6. Speech. 7. Know, 8. Allow. 9. Hearts gladden. 10. A small horse. 11. Lean. 12. Will. 13. Care not. 14. Must, 15. Begun. 16. Everyone.

Therefore, Sir Monk,—Sir Peter, whatever your name may be— please tell us something else. For certainly I swear, in the name of the Lord who died for our salvation, when I say that but for the tinkling sound of the bells hanging in every side of your bridle, I would certainly have fallen down asleep into the mud, though it is never deep enough, before you had finished talking, for assuredly as learned people say, when a speaker finds his audience thinning away, it hardly profits him in anyway to continue his speech in such circumstances ; and I know well enough that I have in me the stuff of a good listener if a story is well told. Sir, I pray you tell us something about hunting".

But the Monk declined the offer adding that he was in no mood for fun and that the Host had better ask someone else for it.

Then our Host called out in an informal tone to the Nun's Priest, "Now, Parson, come forward, Sir John, and tell us something to gladden our hearts and banish the depression of our mind. Although you are riding on a poor and lean horse, he is all right so long as he serves you. It all depends on your keeping up your spirits which will be the real test of the enjoyment of your life."

"Yes, Host" said he, "riding or walking, blame me if I be not in good spirits." Immediately thereafter this goodly Priest began his tale addressing one of us to the following effect.

The Nun's Priest's Tale

Heere Bigynneth The Nonnes Preestes Tale of the
Cok and Hen.—Chauntecleer and Pertelote.

A POVRE wydwe, somdel[1] stape[2] in age,
Was whilom[3] dwellyng in a narwe cotage
Beside a greve, stondynge in a dale.
This wydwe, of which I telle yow my tale,
Syn[4] thilke[5] day that she was last wyf,
In pacience ladde a ful symple lyf,
For litel was hir catel and hir rente[6].
By housbondrie of swich as God hire sente
She foond hirself, and eek[7] hir doghtren two.
Thre large sowes hadde she, and namo ;
Thre keen and eek a sheep that highte[8] Malle.
Ful sooty was hir bour[9], and eek hire halle,
In which she eet ful many a sklendre meel[10] ;
Of poynaunt[11] sauce hir needed never a deel[12]
No deyntee morsel passed thrugh hir throte ;
Hir diete was accordant[13] to hir cote[14] ;
Replecciouu[15] ne made hire nevere sik ;
Attempree diete was all hir phisik,
And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce[16].
The goute lette hire nothyng for to daunce,
Napoplexie[17] shente[18] nat hir heed ;
No wyn ne drank she, neither whit ne reed ;
Hir bord was served moost with whit and blak,—
Milk and broun breed, in which she foond no lak ;
Seynd[19] bacoun and somtyme an eg or tweye[20],
For she was, as it were, a maner deye[21].

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1. Somewhat. 2. Advanced. 3. Once upon a time. 4. Since: 5. Same. 6. Income. 7. Also. 8. Called. 9. Bed-room. 10. Slender meal. 11. Pungent. 12. Much. 13. According to. 14. Cottage. 15. Excess. 16. Contentment. 17. Apoplexy. 81. Tormented. 19. Smoked. 20. One or two. 21. A kind of dairy-keeper.

The Nun's Priest's Tale

Here begins The Nun's Priest's Tale of the Cock and Hen—Chanticleer and Pertelote.

Once upon a time, a poor widow, who presented a figure somewhat stooping under the load of years, dwelt in a humble cottage which stood by the side of a grove standing in a valley. Ever since she had ceased to be a wife she earned her living simply and economically. Her property was small and so was the rent of her cottage. She supported herself and her two daughters with great economy. Her animal-wealth consisted of three hogs, three cows and a sheep. The cottage inside which she ate many a frugal meal with her daughters, was smoky and sooty. No pungent sauce gave relish to her frugal meal in order to sharpen her appetite. Her diet was perfectly in keeping with her dress, as both were humble. She never made herself sick through overeating and her temperate diet was all the medicine she took to keep herself in health. She derived sincere pleasure in activity and exercise, which she enjoyed with all her heart.

No gout stood in the way of her dancing. No apoplexy made her head shake. No wine formed part of her store or cellar, her only beverage being milk. Her frugal meals consisted of brown bread, singed bacon and, as the case might be, one or two eggs ; for she was a kind of dairy-keeper so to say.

Economical.

A yeerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute.
With stikkes, and a drye dych withoute,
In which she hadde a Cok, heet[1] Chauntecleer,
In al the land of crowyng has his peer.
His voys[2] was muiier than the murie orgon,
On messe dayes that in the chirche gon[3] ;
Wel sikerer[4] was his crowyng in his ogge[5]
Than is a clokke, or an abbey or logge[6].
By nature he knew ech ascencioun
Of the equynoxial in thilke toun ;
For whan degrees fiftene were ascended,
Thanne crew he, that it myghte nat been amended.[7]
His coomb was redder than the fyn coral,
And batailled[8] as it were a castel wal ;
His byle was blak, snd as the jeet[9] it shoon ;
Lyk asure[10] were his legges end his toon[11] ;
Hise nayles whitter than the lylye flour,
And like the burned gold was his colour.

This gentil cok hadde in his governaunce
Sevene hennes, for to doon al his plesaunce,
Whiche were hise sustres[12] and his paramours,
And wonder lyk[13] to hym, as of colours :
Of whiche the faireste hewed[14] on hir throte.
Was cleped[15] faire damoysele[16] Pertelote.
Curteys she was, discreet and debonaire[17],
And compaignable[18], and bar[19] hyrself so faire
Syn thilke day that she was seven-nyght oold,
That trewely she hath the herte in hoold[20]
Of Chauntecleer, loken[21] in every lith[22] ;

1. Named. 2. Voice. 3. Play. 4. Well timed. 5. Lodging. 6. Instrument for telling the time. 7. Bettered. 8. Battlemented. 9. A kind of hard coral. 10. Azure blue. 11. Toes. 12. Sisters. 13. Resemble wonderfully. 14. Hued. 15. Called. 16. Damsel. 17. Gentle. 18. Sociable. 19. Bore. 20. Control. 21. Looked. 22. Limb.

She had a yard enclosed with sticks and a dry ditch on the outside. It was in this yard that she kept a cock named Chanticleer, than whom there was not heard a merrier crow in all the country round. He was as faithful to his morning hour as the abbey clock. He could divide as if by instict the time of the ascension of the sun. When the sun had risen fifteen degrees, it would then be time for him to crow and it was a delight to hear him do this. His comb was of a shade ruddier than the finest coral. It was embattled like the tower of a castle. He had a black bill which shone like jet. His legs and toes partook of the sky blue colour. His nails were a shade whiter than the lily flower while his neck and back looked like burnished or liquid gold.

This gentle cock had in his train seven hens his wives, who were all of different colours of which the fairest about the throat and breast was Dame Pertelote. She was, indeed, a most courteous, prudent, gentle and sociable lady. Ever since the seventh day after her birth, she had been conducting herself so nicely *i. e.*, in such a becoming manner that she succeeded in holding fast the heart of Sir Chanticleer by ties of love.

I Rising.

He loved hire so that wel was hym therwith ;
And swiche a joye was it to here hem synge,[1]
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to sprynge,[2]
In sweete accord, 'My lief is faren in londe' ;[3]—
For thinke tyme, as I have understonde,
Beestes and briddes koude speke and synge.
And so bifel, that in a dawenynge,[4]
As Chauntecleer among hise wyves alle
Sat on his perche, that was in the halle,[5]
And next hym sat this faire Pertelote,
This Chauntecleer gan gronen[6] in his throte,
As man that in his dreem is drecched[7] soore
And whan that Pertelote thus herde hym roore,
She was agast, and seyde, 'O herte deere
What eyleth[8] yow, to grone in this manere ?
Ye been a verray[9] slepere, fy, for shame'!
And he answerde and seyde thus : 'Madame,
I pray yow that ye take it nat agrief :[10]
By God, me mette[11] I was in swich meschief
Right now, that yet myn herte is soore afright.
Now God', quod he, 'my swevene[12], recche[13] aright,
And kepe my body out of fould prisoun[14].
Me mette how that I romed up and doun
Withinne[15] oure yeerd, wheer as I saugh a beest.
Was lyk an hound wolde,[16] han maad areest
Upon my body, and han me deed.
His colour was bitwixe[17] yelow and reed,
And tipped[18] was his tayl, and bothe hise eeris,[19]
with blak, unlyk[20] the remenant[21] of hise heeris ;[22]
His snowte[23] smal, with glowynge eyen tweye
Yet of his look for feere almoost I deye,[24]
This caused me my gronyng doutelees[25]

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1. Hear them sing. 2. Rise. 3. My love is gone away into foreign parts. 4. Dawning. 5. Drawing-room. 6. Groan. 7. Tormented. 8. Alieth. 9. Real. 10. Amiss. 11. I dreamed. 12. Dream. 13. Interpret. 14. Prison. 15. Within. 16. Would. 17. Between. 18. Spotted. 19. Ears. 20. Unlike. 21. Remnant. 22. Hairs. 23. Nose. 24. Die. 25. Doubtless.

For this he loved her and this brought him complete happiness. It was a great pleasure indeed to hear them singing in perfect harmony before sunrise My love has gone away into foreign lands, for in those good old days I have often heard that birds and beasts were in the habit of singing and speaking as we do.

It so happened one day just before day-break as Chanticleer sat on his perch in the company of his wives with Pertelote seated next to him he started groaning in his throat like one troubled in a wicked dream. When she heard him groan in that manner she said, "My own darling, what makes you groan so? You have always been a sound sleeper. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

The cock, then, made the following reply to the hen, "Madam, I beg of you not to be worried over this. But, by God, I have fallen in such trouble that my heart still quakes with fear at the very thought of it. May God be pleased to give me a clear interpretation of my dream, so as to keep me safe and sound in mind and body. I dreamt as if I was walking up and down our yard when I was confronted with a beast somewhat like a hound who would have seized me and put me to my death. The colour of his body was an admixture of yellow and red. Both his ears and his tail were spotted with black. His snout was sharp. Besides, he had two sparkling eyes. The mere look or expression of his eyes sends a shiver of fear through my frame and makes me ready to die. It is highly probable that it was this wicked dream that caused me to groan."

'Avoy'[1] quod she, 'fy on yow, herteless[2] ?
Allas, quod she, 'for by that God above !
Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love.
I kan nat love a coward, by my feith !
For certes, what so any womman seith,
We alle desiren, if it myghte bee,
To han housbondes hardy, wise, and free,
And secree,[3] and ny nygard,[4] ne no fool,
No hym that is agast[5] of every tool,[6]
No noon avauntour[7] : By that God above !
How dorste[8] ye seyn, for shame, unto youre love
That any thyng myghte make yow aferd
Have ye no, mannes[9] herte, and han a berd ?[10]

Allas ! and konne ye been agast of swevenys ?
Nothyng, God woot,[11] but vanitee in swevene[12] is.
Swevenes engendren[13] of repleccions,[14]
And oft of fume and of complecciouns,[15]
Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.[16]
Certes this dreem, which ye han met tonyght,
Cometh of the grete superfluytee
Of youre rede colera,[17] pardee[18]
Which causeth folk to dreden in hir[19] dremes
Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes.[20]
Of rede beestes, that they wol hem byte,
Of conteks[21] and of whelpes grete and lyte ;
Right as the humour of malencolie
Causeth ful many a man in sleep to crie,
For feere of blake beres,[22] or boles[23] blake,
Or elles blake develes[24] wol hem take.

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1. Alas. 2. Coward. 3. Secretive. 4. Niggard. 15. Afraid. 6. Anything. 7. Braggart. 8. Ware. 9. Man's. 10. Beard. 11. Knows. 12. Dreams. 13. Are generated by. 14. Overeating. 15. Temperament. 16. Person. 17. Red choler (humour). 18. By God. 19. Their. 20. Flames. 21. Contests. 22. Bears. 23. Bulls. 24. Devils.

"Away !" said she, "Shame on your faint heart ! Alas by God, you have now lost all my affection.

I cannot love a coward, in faith, for whatever a woman may say we all wish our husbands to be bold, wise and free, neither a fool nor a miser and, above all, no braggart. How dare you for shame, say to your love that you are afraid of something ? Have you a man's beard and not his heart ?

Boastful.

Alas !. it fails my understanding to think how you could be frightened by a dream which God knows is all vanity. Dreams originate from fumes and abundance of some kind of humour. And I have no doubt that this dream which you have experienced to-night, originated from excess of your red 'choler' which makes people dream of arrows and of fire with red flames of red beasts that try to attack them, of conflicts and strifes and red wasps, great and small, as the humour of melancholy will cause a person to cry out in his sleep for fear of attack by bulls and bears and black devils ready to seize to their persons. I could also tell you of

Of othere humours koude I telle also
That werken[1] many a man in sleep ful wo ;[2]
But I wol passe as lightly as I kan.
Lo Catoun,[3] which that was so wys a man,
Seyde he nat thus, "Ne do no forc,[4] of dremes"?
Now sire', quod she, 'when we flee fro the bemes,
For Goddes love, as taak[5] some laxatyf[6]!
Up peril of my soule, and of my lyf,
I conseille[7] yow the beste, (I wol nat lye,)
That bothe of colere[8] and of malancolye
Ye purge yow ; and, for ye shal nat tarie,
Though in this toun is noon apothecarie,[9]
I shal myself to herbes techen[10] yow (B. 4139)
That shul been for youre heele[11], and for youre prow ;[12]
And in oure yeerd the herbes shal I fynde,
The whiche han of hire[13] propretee by kynde[14]
To purge yow, bynethe and eek above
For yet nat this, for Goddes owene love !
Yet been ful coleryk of compleccioun[15]
Ware[16] the sonne in his ascencioun[17]
Ne fynde yow nat repleet of humours hoote ;[18]
And if it do, I dar wel leye a grote[19]
That ye shut have a fevere terciane,[20]
Or an agu, that may be youre bane.[21]
A day or two ye shul have digestyves
Of wormes, er ye tak youre laxatyves[22]
Of lawriol,[23] centaure[24] and fumetere,
Or ells of ellebor[25] that groweth there,
Of Ketapuce[26] or of gaitrys berois[27]
Of herebe-yve[28], growyng in our yeerd, ther mery[29] is ;

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1. Work. 2. Tronble, woe. 3. Dionysius Cato. 4. Force. 5. Take. 6. Laxative. 7. Counsel. 8. Choler. 9. No physician. 10. Direct, 11. Health. 12. Benefit. 13. Their. 14. Variety. 15. Temperament. 16. Beware. 17. Ascension. 18. Hot humours i. e. choler 19. Coin. 20. Fever increasing every other day. 21. Death. 25. Laxative. 26. For purging choler and phlegm. 27. Purge for melancholy. 25. Laxative for purging cholerio bumours. 26. Seed of a tree for purging fumes. 27. A strong purgative, 28. A herb for curing fever. 29. Pleasant.

other humours of the body which cause a lot of distress to a sleeping man. But let this matter pass. By the way, does not Cato that wise man, advise, 'Do not pay any serious attention to dreams'."

"Now, Sir", continued she, "when you fly down from your beam, let me recommend and urge you, for Heaven's sake, to take some kind of cooling herb—some laxative. You may depend upon it that I give you this piece of advice and recommend you this herb to purge your system of all trace of choler and shade of melancholy. You should be well advised not to waste your time, as there is no apothecary or physician in this town, and I shall myself inform you of a few simples or herbs that I shall come across in our yard for your benefit.

I shall find out from our yard a few drugs which have the property of thoroughly cleansing your blood ; you are of a very choleric temperament. As such, you must take care when the sun comes out in its full strength to ensure that you may not be full of hot humour. If you are not careful in this regard, I bet that you are sure to be laid up with tertian fever. As a specific against this particular ailment (dreaming wicked dreams) I would suggest that you should take some worms as a kind of digestive before you take any of these drugs such as laurcola, centaury, or fumetary or hellebore, spurge or dogwood berries or ground-ivy all of which are growing in the yard.

Pekke hem up right as they growe, and ete hem yn[1]
Be myrie, housbonde, for youre fader kyn[2] (B. 4159)
Dredeth no dreem ; I kan sey yow namoore'.
'Madame', quod he, 'graunt mercy[3] of your loore,[4]
But nathelees, as touchyng daun[5] Catoun,
That hath of wysdom swich a great renoun,
Though that he had no dremes for to drede,
By God ! men may in olde bookes rede
Of many a man, moore of auctorie[6]
Than evere Caton was, so moot I thee !
That al the revers[7] seyn of his sentence,[8]
And han wel founden by experience
Than dremes been significaciouns[9]
As wel of joye as tribulaciouns[10]
That folk enduren in this lif present.
Ther nedeth make of this noon argument,
The verray preeve[11] sheweth is in dede
'Oon of the gretteste auctour[12] that men rede
Seith thus, that whilom[13] two felawes wente
On pilgimage, in a ful good entente ;[14]
And happed so they coomen in a toun,
Wher as ther was swich congregacioun[15]
Of people, and eek so streit[16] of herbergage,[17]
That they no founde as muche as a cotage (B. 4180)
In which they bothe myghte y-logged[18] bee ;
Wherfore they mosten of necessitee,[19]
As for that nyght, departen compaignye ; [20]
And ech of hem gooth to his hostelrye,
And took his loggyng as it wolde falle,

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1. In, 2. Stock. 3. Many thanks. 4. Learning. 5. Master. 6, Authority. 7. Opposite. 8, Judgment. 9. Premonitions. 10. Troubles. 11. Test. 12. Authors; 13. Once. 14. Intent. 15, Crowd, 16. Narrow, 17. Lodging. 18. Lodged. 19. Pressure of neccesity. 20. Part company.

All you have got to do is to pick them where they grow and eat them. So, my dear husband, please do not worry but be merry for the sake of the preservation of your father's racial stock and do not be afraid of dreams. This is all I have to suggest to you.'

'Madam', said he, 'Very many thanks for your learned suggestions. But nevertheless while conceding the learning of Cato and the wisdom of his suggestions particulary about 'taking no heed of dreams' I am sure you will also find ancient lore of higher authorities than Cato, holding exactly the opposite opinion, based on their well-founded experience. It is the view that dreams warn us of joys and sorrows, that we are to get in our life on earth. This view does not require any argument, for its proof is furnished by experience and this is sure to carry conviction.

One of the greatest authorities we read of. cites the story of two persons who once upon a time went on a pilgrimage. It so happened that they arrived at a town where there was such a lot of crowd of people that the lodgings were scanty with the result that they could not find so much as a cottage where they might live together.

They were thus obliged to part company with each other by pressure of circumstances. each going to his inn and putting up with such entertainment as he could find.

That oon of hem was logged in a stalle,
Fer in a yeerd, with oxen of the plough ,
That oother man was logged wel ynough'
As was his aventure,[1] or his fortune,
That us governeth alle as in commune,[2]

"And so bifel that longe er it were day,
This man mette in his bed, ther as he lay.
How that his felawe gan upon hym calle,
And seyde, "Allas! for in an oxes stalle
This nyght I shall be mordred ther[3] I lye ;
Now helpe me, deere brother, or I dye ;
In alle haste com to me !" he seyde.

'This man out of his sleepe for feere abrayde ;
But whan that he was wakened of his sleep,
He turned hym and took of this no keep ;
Hym thoughte his dreme nas[4] but a vanitee.
Thus twies in his slepyng dremed hee,
And atte thridde[5] tyme yet his felawe
Cam as hym thoughte, and seide, "I am now slawe[6]
Bihoold my bloody woundes, depe and wyde ;
Arys up erly in the morwe-tyde,[7]
And at the west gate of the toun," quod he,
"A carte ful of donge[8] ther shaltow[9] se,
In which my body is hid ful prively ;
Do thilke carte arresten boldely.
My gold caused my mordre sooth to sayn"—
And tolde hym every point how he was slayn,
With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe.
And truste wel, his dreem he foond ful trewe ;
For on the morwe as soone as it was day,
To his felawes in he took the way,
And whan that he cam to this oxes stalle,
After his felawe[10] he bigan to calle.

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1. Adventure. 2. Community, 3. Where, 4. Nothing. 5. Third, 6. Slain. 7. Time. 8, Dung. 9. Shalt thou. 10, Companion.

One of them was obliged to lodge in an ox-stall while the other was well accommodated by a stroke of good luck which plays its part and governs the destiny of us all.

Now it so happened that during the night the one who was comfortably housed dreamed that the other was crying out for his help as he was being murdered in the ox-stall where he was lodged for the night. "Do come quickly to help me, dear brother," said his companion from the ox-stall, "Or I die". He woke up from his sleep with a start at this but thinking it to be only a dream he took no account of it, so turning round in his bed being overpowered by sleep he began to sleep. Twice, however, he dreamed the same dream. The third time he thought his companion had come to him and said, "I am now slain. You can see the deep and wide gashes in my body. So get up ear'y in the morning and proceed to the west-gate of the town. There you shall see a cart full of dung in which you will find my body secretly concealed. You will then have the carter arrested. My money was the cause of my murder, to tell you the truth." In this way it seemed to him that this companion related to him the story of his death in all its details with a piteous and pale face. You may take it from me that he found his dream true in all respects, for early next morning at daybreak he went to the inn where his companion had been lodged in an ox-stall and made enquiries there.

The hostiler answerde him anon
And seyde, "Sire, your felawe is agon;
As soone as day he wente out of the toun."

'This man gan fallen in suspecioun,
Remembrynge on hise dremes, that he mette,
And forth[1] he gooth, no lenger wold he lette[2]
Unto the west-gate of the toun, and fond
A donge carte, as it were to donge lond[3],
That was arrayed in that same wise[4]
As ye han herd the dede man devyse;
And with an hardy herte[5] he gan to crye
Vengeance and justice of this felonye.[6]
"My felawe mordred in this same nyght,
And in this carte he lith gapyng upright.[7]
I crye out on the ministres,"[8] quod he,
"That sholden kepe and reulen this citee;
Harrow[9]! allas! heere lith my felawe slayn"
What sholde I moore unto this tale sayn?
The people out-sterte and caste the cart to grounde,
And in the myddel of the dong they founde
The dede man, that mordred was al newe.

'O blisful God, that art so just and trewe
Lo, how that thou biwreyest[10] mordre alway!
Mordre wol out, that so we day by day;
Mordre is so wlatsom,[11] and abhomynable
To God, that is so just and resonable,
That he wol nat suffre it heled[12] be.
Though it abyde a yeer, or two, or thre,
Mordre wol out, this my conclusioun.
And right anon, ministres of that toun
Han hent the cartere and so soore hym pyned.

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1. Forthwith. 2. Delay. 3. Dung country. 4. Manner. 5. Boldly. 6. Murder, 7. Lying with mouth open. 8. Ministers of justice. 9. A cry of distress, 10. Betrays, 11. Revolting, 12. Hidden.

The inn-keeper told him that his fellow-traveller had left the town early in the morning at daybreak. The survivor, bearing in mind his previous night's dream, began to suspect the truth of this statement. So he forthwith proceeded to the west-gate of the town where he came across a dung-cart exactly as his dead companion had described overnight.

He then began to shout for help and for revenge saying that his friend must have been lying murdered in the cart. I need hardly add anything more. People of the town now rushed out and overturned the cart on which they found the body of the dead man recently murdered lying covered up in the dung.

'O good, true and blessed Lord! Behold how thou always dost contrive murder to reveal itself. The saying, 'Murder will out' is proved to the hilt every day. Indeed so revolting and hateful is this crime to a just and merciful God that He will not suffer it to be kept a secret, even if it might remain concealed for years. Straightaway, the ministers of justice in that town having seized the carters and subjected them to

And eek the hostiler so soore engyned.[1]
That the biknewe hire[2] wikkednesse anon,
And were an-hanged by the nekke-bon.

'Heere may men seen that dremes been to drede !
And centes, in the same book I rede,
Right in the nexte chapitre after this,—
I gabbe[3] nat, so have I joye or blis !—
Two men that wolde han passed over see,
For certeyn cause, into a fer[4] contree,
If that the wynd ne hadde been contrarie,
That made hem in a citee for to tarie
That stood ful myrie upon an haven side ;
But on a day, agayn the even-tyde,
The wynd gan chaunge, and blew right as hem leste[5].
Jolif and glad they wente upto hir reste,
And casten[6] hem ful erly for to saille.

'But to that o man fil a greet mervaille ;
That oon of hem, in slepying as he lay,
Hym mette a wonder dreem, agayn the day ;
Him thoughte a man stood by his beddes syde
And hym comanded that he sholde abyde,
And seyde hym thus : "If thou tomorwe wende,
Thou shalt be dreynt;[7] my tale is at an ende."

"He wook and tolde his felawe what he mette.
And preyde hym his viage for to lette ;[8]
As for that day, he preyede hym to byde.
His felawe, that lay by his beddes syde,
Gan for to laughe, and scorned hym ful faste.
"No dreem," quod he, "may so myn herte agaste,
That I wol lette for to do my thynges :
I sette nat a straw by thy dremynges,
For swevenes[9] been but vanytees and japes ;[10]

1. Cross-examined. 2. Confessed. 3. Talk. 4. Far. 5. Pleased. 6. Resolved. 7. Drowned. 8. Postponed. 9. Dreams. 10. Tricks.

cross-examination, they confessed their wickedness and both of them were hanged by their necks.

'Thus you may well see that dreams are to be dreaded. And in the very next chapter of the same book you may read (—and I do not talk idly for so may I enjoy or or bliss as I hope to have it—).

Of two men who were about to undertake a voyage to a distant land but who happened to be detained on account of unfavourable wind. However, one day the wind began to change towards evening. So full of joy they retired to rest that night thinking of undertaking the the voyage on the following morning.

But a strange thing happened to one of them. As he lay locked in sleep, he dreamed that a man who stood by his bed-side, ordered him to stay behind, "For if," he said, "You go tomorrow you will be drowned ; that is all I need to say."

He woke up and told his companion all that had happened to him, entreating him at the same time to put off his voyage for the day. The other man who was lying by his bed-side, started laughing at this and began to mock at him saying, "No dream can deter me from attending to my affairs. I attach no importance at all to your dream. I care a straw for it. It is full of vanity and empty tricks.

Men dreme alday of owles or of apes,
And of many a maze[1] therwithal ;
Men dreme of thyng that nevere was, ne shal.[2]
But sith[3] I see that thou wolt heere abyde,
And thus forslewthen[4] wilfully thy tyde,
God woot, it reweth[5] me, and have good day'.
And thus he took his leve, and wente his way.
But er that he hadde half his cours y-seyled,[6]
Noot I nat why, ne what myschaunce it eyled,[7]
But casuelly[8] the shippes botme rente,
And ship and man under the water wente,
In sighte of othere shippes it bisyde,
That with hem seyled at the same tyde[9]
And ther fore, faire Pertelote so deere,
By swiche ensamples olde maistow leere,[10]
That no man sholde been to recchelees[11]
Of dremes, for I seye thee, doutelees,
That many a dreem ful soore is for to drede.

'Lo, in the lyf of Seint Kenelm I rede,
That was Kenulphus sone, the noble Kyng
Of Mercenrike, how Kenelm mette a thyng.
A lite[12] er he he was mordred, on a day,
His mordre in his avysioun[13] he say.
His norice[14] hym expowned[15] every deel
His swevene, and bad hym for to kepe hym weel
For traisoun ; but he nas but seven yeer oold,
And ther fore litel tale[16] hath he toold[17]
Of any dreem, so hooly was his herte.
By God ! I hadde levere[18] than my sherte[19]

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1. Wild fancy. 2. Nor shall be. 3. Since. 4. Kill. 5. Grieves. 6. Sailed. 7. Failed. 8. By some mischance. 9. Time. 10. Mayest thou learn. 11. Reckless. 12. Little. 13. Dream. 14. Nurse. 15. Explained. 16. Importance. 17. Attach. 18. Rather. 19. Shirt.

Men dream of things such as owls or things supposed to bring in evil that never did nor will ever come to pass in actual life. But since you are inclined to lose the advantage of the favourable wind and waste your time wilfully in idleness, I bid you good-bye." And so he took his leave and sailed away: But before he had covered half his course, I do not know by what mischance it came about, the ship was wrecked and split into two with the result that both the ship and the men on board went down into the bottom in full sight of other ships which were sailing all right by its side.

Therefore, dear Pertelote, you may see from these old examples that no one should be careless of dreams for many of them are so fateful that we have good reason to be afraid of them.

Now take, for instance, St. Kenelm's life which I have read. Now this St. Kenelm dreamed a dream of his murder before he was killed. His nurse expounded to him every detail of the dream and bade him to guard himself well against treason. But as he was then only in the seventh year of age, he did not attach any importance to it. He was too innocent to be able to protect himself against guile or villainy. By God, I am ready to part with my shirt

That ye hadde rad his legende, as have I.
Dame Pertelote, I sey you trewely,
Macrobeus, that writ the Avisioun
In Affrike of the worthy Cipioun,
Affermeth[1] dremes, and seith that they been
Warnynge of thynges tat men after seen ;
And forther-moore, I pray yow, looketh wel
In the Olde Testament, of Daniel,
If he heeld dremes any vanitee.

'Reed eek of Joseph, and ther shul ye see
Wher dremes be somtyme,—I sey nat alle,—
Warnynge of thynges that shul after falle[2]
Looke of Egipte the kyng, daun Pharao.
His bakere and his butiller[3] also,
Wher they ne felte, noon effect in dremes !
Whose wol seken[4] actes of sondry remes[5]
May rede of dremes many a wonder thyng :—

'Lo, Cresus, which that was of Lyde kyng,
Mette he nat that he sat upon a tree,
Which signified[6] he sholde anhanged bee ?

'Lo heere Andromacha, Ectores wyf,
That day that Ector sholde lese his lyf,
She dremed on the same nyght biforn,
How that the lyf of Ector sholde be lorn[7]
If thilke day he wente into bataille ;[8]
She warned hym, but it myghte nat availle ;
He wente forth to fighte natheles,[9]
And he was slayn anon of Achilles.
But thilke tale is al to longe to telle,
And eek it is ny day, I may nat dwelle ;

1. Gives weight to. 2. Happen. 3. Butler. 4. Search. 5. Realms. 6. Foretold. 7. Be lost. 8. Battle. 9. Nevertheless.

if you have not read this legend as I have. Madam Pertelote, I tell you truly that Macrobius has written of dreams and can interpret to us the visions of young Scipio Africanus. He affirms that dreams are premonitions of coming events which come true later on. Then there is the Old Testament—a manual which is well worth for your study. The book of Daniel in the Old Testament contains visions. Consider Daniel and see if he regarded dreams as vain things.

Then take the case of Croseus, the King of Lydia. Did he not dream that he was seated on a tree which symbolised that he would die by hanging?

Or take the case of Andromache, wife of the great Hector. She dreamed on the night before the day he was to lose his life that if Hector went to war, he was destined to be killed in battle on that very day. She warned him, but all her warnings were unheeded, for he went forth to fight all the same and was immediately killed by Achiles. It is rather a long tale to tell and I would rather not dwell on it any longer as it is now nearly dawn.

Shortly I seye, as for conclusioun,
That I shall han of this avisioun
Adversitee ; and I seye forthermoor,
That I ne telle of laxatyves no stoor,[1]
For they been venymes,[2] I woot it weel ;
I hem diffye,[3] I love hem never a deel

'Now lat us speake of myrthe, and stynte[4] al this :
Madame Pertelote, so have I blis !
Of thyng God hath sent me large grace ;
For whan I se the beautee of youre face,
Ye been so scarlet-reed aboute youre eyen,
It maketh al my drede for to dyen,[5]
For, al so siker as in principio,[6]
Mulier est hominis confusio[7],—
Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,

"Womman is mannes joy and al his blis"—
For, when I feele a-nyght your softe syde,
Al-be-it that I may nat on your ryde,
For that oure perche is maad so narwe, allas !
I am so ful of joye and of solas,
That I diffye bothe swevene and dreem' :
And with that word he fly[8] doun fro the beem,
(For it was day), and eke his hennes alle ;
And with a chuk[9] he gan hem for to calle,
For he hadde founde a corn lay in the yerd.
Real he was, he was namoore aferd[10]
He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,
And trad as ofte, er that it was pryme,
He looketh as it were a grym[11] leoun,[12]
And on his toes he rometh up and doun ;
Hym deigned[13] nat to sette his foot to grounde.
He chukketh whan he hath a corn y-founde,

1. Value. 2. Poisons. 3. Defy. 4. Stop. 5. Die. 6. In the beginning, 7. Woman is man's confusion. 8. Flew. 9. Chuckle of a cock. 10. Afraid. 11. Grim. 12. Lion. 13. Pretended.

To put it briefly, all these point to the conclusion that my dream will bring me some misfortune. And furthermore, I attach no value to laxatives, for I know they are poisonous and I have often suffered by them before and I defy them.

But let us for the moment drop this painful subject and think only of mirth and jollity. Madam Pertelote, I am indeed so happy when I look at your beautiful face with the bright red patch round about your eyes that it banishes all thoughts of fear from my mind, for truly, we may say, 'Woman is man's joy and delight' with the Latin saying.

I am so full of comfort and happiness that I defy all dreams and visions. With these words he and all his hens flew down from the beam, for it was daytime. Then with a chuckle he called all his hens a round him as he found some corn lying about the yard. He looked splendid and right royal as he moved freely and was not in the least afraid of anything having shed all fears. He gave himself the airs of a lion by his superb bearing and air of dignity. He roamed up and down the yard upon his toes, almost disdaining to set his feet upon the ground. He would give a chuckle as soon as he lighted upon a grain of corn, followed by all his wives.

And to hym rennen thanne hise wives alle.
Thus roial[1], as a prince is his halle,
Leve I this Chauntecleer in his posture,
And after wol I telle his aventure[2]

Whan that the monthe in which the world bigan,
That highte March, when God first maked man,
Was compleet, and y-passed were also,
Syn March bigan, thritty dayes and two,
Bifel that Chauntecleer in all his pryde,
Hise sevene wyves walkynge by his syde,
Caste up hise eyen to the brighte sonne[3]
That in the signe of Taurus hadde y-ronne
Twenty degrees and oon, and som-what moore,
And knew by kynde, and by noon oother loore,
That it was pryme,[4] and crew with blisful stevene[5].
'The sonne', he seyde, 'is clomben up on hevene.
Fourty degrees and oon, and moore Y-wis.
Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
Herkneth thise blisful briddes how they synge,
And se the frosshe floures how they sprynge !
Ful is myn herte of revel and solas ;
But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas[6] ;
For evere the latter[7] ende of joy is wo.
God woot that wordly joye is soon ago !
And if a rethor[8] koude endite[9],
He in a cronycle sauffy[10] myghte it write.
As for a sovereyn notabilitee.[11]
Now every wys man, let him herkne me ;
This storie is al so trewe, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot de Lake.
That wommen holde in ful greet reverence.
Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence.[12]

1. Royal. 2. Fate. 3. Sun. 4. Time from 6 to 9 A. M. 5. Voice. 6. Mischance. 7. Ultimate. 8. Orator. 9. Compose. 10. Safely. 11. A thing of note. 12. Tale.

And so to him ran all his wives in response to his call. The Chanticleer behaved like a royal prince in his banquet-hall in his posture ; so I leave him there and proceed to relate all his adventures.

The events that follow took place during the later part of the same day. In the beginning of May, it so happened that as Chanticleer, surrounded by his seven wives on all his sides, cast his eyes in the direction of the bright sun which had made a little more than twenty-degrees in the sign of Taurus, he knew almost by instinct that it was about 6 o'clock Immediately thereafter, he sounded the hour with his merry clarion-call. "Madam Pertelote", said he, "my world's bliss, just listen to the songs of these happy birds and see how the fresh flowers grow and bloom. All these sights, and sounds fill my heart with great joy and pleasure". But, as ill-luck would have it, a mishap befell him all of a sudden, for grief follows close upon the heels of joy. Heaven knows that the ultimate end of all earthly joy is sorrow—this is a sovereign truth which all chroniclers should do well to note down. Now, listen to me, all wise men, for the story I am going to tell you is as true as that book of Sir Launcelot de Lake, (the perfect knight and lover) which all the women held in high regard. Now I proceed to the tale.

A colfox,[1] ful of sly iniquitee [2],
That in the grove hadde worned yeres three,
By heigh ymaginacioun[3] forn-cast,[4]
The same nyght thurgh-out the hegges[5] brast[6]
Into the yerd ther[7] Chauntecleer the faire
Was wont, and eek hise wyves, to repaire !
And in a bed of wortes[18] stille he lay,
Til it was passed undren[9] of the day.
Waitynge his tyme on Chauntecleeer to falle ;
As gladly doon thise homycides[10] alle
That in await liggen[11] to mordre men.

O false mordrour, lurkynge in the den !
O newe Scariot[12] ! newe Genyloun[13] !
False dissymulour,[14] O Greek Synoun,[15]
That broughest Troye al outrely to sorwe[16] !
O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe
That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes
Thou were ful wel y-warned by thy dremes
That thilke day was perilous to thee,
But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee.
After the opinioun of certein clerkis ;[17]
Witnesse on hym that any parfit[18] clerk is,
That in scole is greet altercacioun[19]
In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,

And hath been of an hundred thousand men ;
But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren,
As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,[20]
Or Boece[21] or Bisshope Bradwardyn[22],
Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng[23]
Streyneth[24] me nedely[25] for to doon a thyng,—
Nedely clepe I symple necessitee,—

1. Of coal-black colour. 2. Evil-mindeness. 3. Imagination, 4. Foreordained. 5 Fences. 6. Burst. 7. Where. 8. Cabbages. 9. Middle. 10. Underhand murders. 11. Linger. 12. Judas Iscariot. 13. Genelon. 14. Pretender. 15. Sinon. 16. Sorrow. 17. Scholars. 18. Perfect. 19. Difference of opinion. 20. St. Augustine. 12. Boethius. 22. Bradwardine. 23. Warning. 24. Constrains. 25. Of necessity.

A fox of coat-black colour and full of sly inequity used to dwell in the grave-yard for three years. Now, the same night preceding the day of the accident, he broke through the hedge into the yard where fair Chanticleer was accustomed to repair and hid himself in a bed of cabbages where he lay quietly till about the middle of the day. He (the fox) was watching his opportunity to fall upon him just as all assassins lie in wait for the enemy to commit murder.

O false assassin, looking for thy victim from thy den ! O new judas Iscariot, a second Genelon ! And O Greek Sinon whose treachery brought about victory to the Greeks after effecting the total ruin of the city of Troy. O Chanticleer, evil overtook you that very morning when you flew from your perch into the yard. You had been warned in your dream well ahead that this fateful day was going to be very inauspicious for you but as men of learning say, what has been ordained is sure to happen. If you ask any accomplished scholar, he will say that there are several schools of thought on this vexed question of predestination.

It is a problem about which several thousand men have debated and discussed. How is it possible for me to sift the grain from the chaff and make a definite pronoucement about it? The holy doctor St. Augustine has contributed to this important question. Besides, two other authorities who have made important contributions on this question were Bishop Bradwardine and Boethius who have attempted to establish the real truth as between these three positions, *viz.*, whether it is the fact of God's divine foreknowledge which constrains me to perform a definite course of action (by 'constraint' is to be meant 'compulsion by necessity')

Or elles if free choys be graunted me
To do that same thyng, or do it noght,
Though God forwoot[1] it er that it was wroght ;
Or if his wityng streyneth nevere a deel,
But by necessitee condicioneel.
I wol not han to do of swich mateere,
My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,
That took his conseil of his wyf with sorwe,[2]
To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
That he hadde met the dreem that I yow tolde.
'Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde ;
Wommannes conceil broughte us first to wo
And made Adam fro Paradys to go,
Ther[3] as he was ful myrie and wel at ese ;
But for I noot to whom it myght displese.
If I conseil of wommen wolde blame,
Passe over, for I seyde it in my game[4]
Rede auctours[5] where they trete of swich mateere,
And what they seyn of wommen ye may heere ;
Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne :
I kan noon harm of no womman divyne
Faire in the soond[6] to bathe hire myrily,
Lith Pertelote, and alle hire sustres[7] by
Agayn the sonne, and Chauntecleer so free
Soong murier than the mermayde[8] in the see ;
For Phisiologus seith sikerly,
How that they syngen wel and myrily.

And so bifel that as he cast his eye
Among the wortes, on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.[9]
No-thyng ne liste hym thanne for to crowe,

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1. Foreknows. 2. Disastrous results. 3. Where. 4. Humour. 5. Authors. 6. Sand, 7. Sisters. 8. Mermaid. 9. In a crouching position.

or whether a person is to be given free choice to do or not to do a given act, even though God had foreknowledge of it or whether Providence is not to be regarded as so important but God's foreknowledge involves conditional necessity to do a particular act. But I decline to discuss such matters, as my tale is of a cock who chose to follow the unfortunate advice of his wife to walk in the yard on that fateful morning immediately following the night of bad dream about which I have just told you. A woman's advice is very often cold. It has brought us all our sufferings with the loss of paradise to Adam where he led a merry life of happiness and ease.

But if anybody feels offended at these words of mine, he should pass them over as they are uttered in a spirit of good humour. You will be well advised to read what great authors have said about this, particularly about women. Anyway, these words are not mine but of the cock, for I can wish no harm to women.

Dame Pertelote along with all her sisters were bathing in the dust with the sun overhead, while Chanticleer was singing as merrily as a mermaid. As he happened to cast his eye upon a butterfly among the cabbages, he became aware of this fox crouching upon his belly. He had no idea of crowing just then but directly after this he started up crying out,

But cride anon, 'Cok ! cok !' and up he sterte,
As man that was affrayed in his herte,—
For natureelly a beest desireth flee
Fro his contrarie,[1] if he may it see,
Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his eye.

This Chauntecleer, whan he gan hym espye,
He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
Seyde, 'Gentil sire, allas, wher wol ye gon ?
Be ye affrayed of me that am youre freend ?
Now certes, I were worse than a feend,
If I to yow wolde harm or vileynye.
I am nat come youre conseil[2] for tespye.
But trewely the cause of my comynge
Was oonly for to herkne how that ye synge ;
For trewely, ye have as myrie a stevene
As any aungel hath that is in hevene.
Therwith ye han in musyk moore feelynge
Than hadde Boece[3], or any that kan synge.
My lord youre fader,—God his soule blesse !
And eek youre mooder, of hire gentillesse.
Han in myn hous Y-been, to my greet ese[4] ;
And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.
But for men speake of syngyng, I wol seye,
So moote[5] I brouke[6] wel myne eyen tweye,
Save yow, I herde nevere man so synge
As dide youre fader in the morwenynge :
Certes, it was of herte, al that he song.
And for to make his voys the moore strong,
He wolde so peyne hym that with bothe hise eyen
He moste wynke[7], so loude he wolde cryen :
And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,

1. Enemy. 2. Secrets. 3, Boethius 4. Agreeably. 5. May.
6. Use. 7. Wink with half shut eyes.

"Cock ! cock !" stricken with great fright, as it is natural for a beast to fly from his enemy, even though he has never before fixed his eyes upon him.

So Chanticleer would have made good his escape but that the fox started addressing him thus quickly, "Gentle sir, are you really going away? Is it because you are afraid of me who is your friend? I would have become worse than a friend if I had harboured feelings of wickedness towards you. My only object in coming here is not to pry into the secrets of your private life but to hear you sing, for, believe me, you sing with the voice of an angel in heaven. Besides, you have a finer feeling for music than Boethius himself or any other songster of his standard. My lord, your father (Heaven rest his soul !) and your gentle mother too had been to my house, to my great delight. I should also be most happy to please and entertain you. As regards singing of songs I can say with the single exception of your ownself I have never heard a better performance than that of your father who put his heart and soul into his songs. And in order to raise the tone of his sweet voice to a higher pitch, he would often strive so that it made him wink his eyes while singing in a loud tone, standing on tiptoe,

He started getting ready like a person who is foolish So he was ravished and attracted

And strecche forth his nekke, long and smal ;
And eek he was of swich discrecioun
That ther nas no man in no regioun
That hym in song or wisedom myghte passe[1].
I have wel rad[2], in "Daun Burnel the Asse",
Among hise vers, how that ther was a cok,
For that a preestes sone yaf[3] hym a knok
Upon his leg, whil he was yong and nyce,
He made hym for to lese his benefice.
But certeyn, ther nys no comparisoun,
Bitwixe the wisedom and discrecioun
Of youre fader and of his subtiltee[4].
Now syngeth, sire, for seinte charitee[5] :
Lat se konne ye youre fader countrefete'.

This Chauntecleer his wynges gan to bete.
As man that koude his traysoun[6] nat espie,
So was he ravysshed[7] with his flaterie.

Allas, ye lordes, may a fals flatour[8]
Is in youre court, and may a losengeour,[9]
That plesen yow wel moore, by my feith,
Than he that soothfastnesse,[10] unto yow seith,
Redeth Ecclesiaste of Flaterye,—
Beth war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye !

This Chauntecleer stood hye upon his toos !
Strecchynge his nekke, and heeld hise yen cloos,
And gan to crowe loude for the nones[11],
And Daun Russell, the fox, stirte up atones,
And by the gargat[12] hente Chauntecleer,
And on his bak toward the wode hym beer ;
For yet ne was ther no man that hym sewed.[13]

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1. Surpass. 2. Read. 3, Gave. 4. Subtlety. 5. Mercy. 6. Treason. 7. Ravished : Overjoyed. 8. Flafterer. 9. Flatterer. 10. Truthfulness. 11. Occasion. 12. Throat. 13. Saw.

and stretching forth his long neck. Besides, he had such understanding or a sense of critical judgment that none could surpass him in wisdom or song. I have read in the verses of Daun Burnel the ass of a cock who in retaliation for the injury inflicted on his leg by the priest's son, was instrumental in making the latter lose his priestly allowance. But certainly there can be no comparison between the wisdom and discretion of your father and his ingenuity. Now, sir, for charity's sake be pleased to sing and let us see if you can imitate or emulate your father's example. So this Chanticleer like one unconscious of treachery, began to beat his wings, so charmed and overjoyed was he with all this flattery.

Also for your lords, you may have many a flatterers in your court who are likely to please you more than what he will tell you nothing but the truth. Read, O lords, what *Ecclesiasticus* has got to say about flatterers and beware of the treachery of such sycophants.

This Chanticleer, standing on his tiptoe, stretching forth his neck and keeping his eyes shut, now began to crow with all his might, whereupon Daun Russell (the fox) started up and caught him by the throat at the same time bearing him off on his back towards the forest, for as yet there was none ready to give him a chase and follow him.

O Destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed[1]
Alas, that Chauntecleer fleigh[2] fro the bemes
Allas, his wyf ne roghte[3] nat of dremes !
And on a Friday fil[4] al this meschaunce.
O Venus, that art goddesse of pleasaunce,
Syn[5] that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
And in thy servyce dide al his poweer,
Moore for delit than world to multiplye,
Why woltestow[6] suffre hym on thy day to dye ?

O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn,
That, whan thy worthy kyng Richard was slyn
With shot, compleynedest his deetn so soore
Why ne hadde I now thy sentence, and thy loore,
The Friday for to chide, as diden ye ?
For on a Friday, sothly, slayn was he (B. 4542)
Thanne wolde I shewe you how that I koude pleyne[7]
For Chauntecleres drede, and for his peyne[8].

Certes, swich cry, ne[9] lamentacioun,
Was nevere of ladyes maad when Ylioun[10]
Was wonne, and Pirrus[11] with his streite swerd,
When he hadde hent[12] kyng Priam by the berd[13]
And slayn hym,—as seith us Eneydos,[14]
As maden alle the hennes in the clos,
Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
But sovereynly[15] dame Pertelote shrighte,[16]
Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
Whan that hir housbonde hadde lost his lyf,
And that the Romayns[17] hadde brend[18] Cartage,[19]
She was so ful of torment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,[20]
And brende hirselven with a stedefast herte,
O woful hennes right so criden ye, (B. 4560)
As whan that Nero brende the citee

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1. Evaded. 2. Flew. 3. Care. 4. Befell. 5 Since. 6 Wouldst thou. 7. Lament. 8. Pain. 9. Nor. 10. Illium. 11. Pyrrhus. 12. Seized. 13. Beard. 14. Aeneid. 15. Royally. 16. Shrieked. 17. Romans. 18. Burned. 19. Carthage. 20. Plunged.

O Destiny, whose decrees cannot be overruled. Alas! that the Chanticleer had to fly from his perch, Alas for the fact that his wife had no faith in dreams. It was on a Friday too that this mischance befell.

It is a pity that this mischance fell on Friday the sacred day of Venus, the Goddess of Beauty, at a time when the Chanticleer was singing in the service of the Goddess, *i. e.*, indulging in sexual pleasures rather than for the multiplication of his kind.

O Geoffrey, dear sovereign master of the art of poesy, who sorely regretted the death of the worthy King Richard when he was slain, why have not I the judgment and learning to reproach you as you did on the same inauspicious day, for on a Friday was he not killed ? Then would I show you how to lament the unfortunate fate of Chanticleer.

When Troy was sacked and Pyrrhus with his fearful sword after having seized old Priam by his grey beard, slew him, the ladies of the royal palace did not set up so great a cry and lamentation as did the hens do at the sight of the Chanticleer. Above them all shrieked Dame Pertelote whose cry was louder than that of the wife of Hasdrubal at the death of her husband when the Romans set fire to Carthage. So full of fury and agony was that noble-hearted woman that with a shout she resolutely rushed into the fire, giving herself for a burnt-offering to her lord.

O unlucky hens, do cry louder than ever—higher than those of the wives of senators when Nero burnt their city

Of Rome, cryden senatoures wyves,
For that hir husbondes losten alle hir lyves
Withouten gilt,—this Nero hath hem slayn.
Now wol I torne to my tale agayn.

This sely[1] wydwe, and eek hir doghtres two,
Herden thise hennes crie and maken wo,
And out at dores stirten they anon,
And syen the fox toward the grove[2] gon,
And bar[3] upon his bak the cok away,
And cryden, 'Out harrow! and weylaway[4]!
Ha! ha! the fox' and after hym they ran,
And eek with staves many another man:
Ran Colle, oure dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
And Malkyn, with a dystaf in hir hand;
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
So were they fered for berkynge of the dogges,
And shoutyng of the men and wommen eek;—
They ronne so hem thoughte hir herte breek.
They yolleden[5], as feendes[6] doon in helle;
The dokes[7] cryden, as men wolde hem quelle[8];
The gees, for feere, flowen over the trees;
Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees;
So hydous was the noyse, a bededicitee[9]!
Certes, he Jakke Straw[10], and his meynee,
Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille.
Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
Of bras they broughten bemes, and of box,
Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and powped,
And therwithal they shriked and they howped;
It seemed as that hevene sholde falle!

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1. Simple. 2. Groove. 3. Bore. 4. Besiege on all sides. 5. Yelled. 6. Fiends. 7. Ducks. 8. Terrify. 9. "O bless us. 10. A leader of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

and their homes and their innocent husbands; Roman senators and others were consumed in the fire to indicate without doubt that it was Nero who had slain their husbands. Now I will proceed with the tale.

The simple widow and her two daughters heard the piteous lamentations of the hens. So out they started when they saw the fox rushing towards the forest with the cock upon his back. "The fox! the fox!" cried they as they rushed after the fox. Many neighbours also joined them in their pursuit with their sticks. Away ran Col, the dog, besides other hunting dogs such as Talbot, Garland and Malkin (a serving-maid) distaff in hand. Away ran the cow and calf. Even the very hogs too scoured off and ran.

It seemed to them as if their hearts would break at the barking of the dogs and the clamour of the people, who shouted like fiends being tortured in Hell. The ducks screamed, the geese flew over the trees and even a swarm of bees was coming out of their hives attracted by the general clamour. In a word, the hideousness of the noise was such that even Jack Straw and his men were not half so loud while out to kill a Fleming as those who gave the pursuers of the fox a hot chase. Brass-made horns and trumpets had been seized up as they added to the general clamour with their help shrieked and hopped and it seemed as if the very heavens would fall on earth.

Now, goode men, I pray yow, herkneth alle ;
Lo, how Fortune turneth sodeynly
The hope and pryde eek of hir enemy !
This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak,
In all his drede unto the fox he spak,
And seyde, 'Sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet sholde I seyn, as wys[1] God helpe me !
"Turneth agayn, ye produe Cherles[2] alle,
A verray pestilence upon yow falle ;
Now am I come unto the wodes syde,
Mougree[3] youre heed[4], the cok shal heere abyde ;
I wol hym ete, in feith, and that anon".
The fox answerde, 'In feith[5] it shal be don' ;—
And as he spak that word, at sodyenly
This cok brak[6] from his mouth delyverly,
And heighe upon a tree he fleigh anon ;
And whan the fox saugh that he was ygon,—

'Allas', quod he, 'O Chauntecleer, allas
I have to yow,' quod he, 'y-doon trespas,
In as muche as I maked you aferd,
Whan I yow hente[7] and brought out of the yerd ;
But, sire, I dide it in no wikke entente[8],
Com doun, and I shal telle yow what I mente ;
I shal seye sooth to yow, God help me so !'

'Nay, thanne,' quod he, 'I shrewe us bothe two,
And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,
If thou bigyle[9] me any ofter than ones[10].
Thou shalt na moore, thrugh thy flaterye,
Do me to synge, and wynke with myn eye,
For he that wynketh, whan he sholde see,
Al wilfully,[11] God lat him nevere thee[12]

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1. Sure. 2. Charles. 3. In spite of. 4. Attention. 5. Really. 6. Brokeaway.. 7. Seized. 8. Intention. 9. Cheat. 10. Once. 11. Cause. 12. Thrive.

And now, good men, I beg of you to notice how Madam Fortune by a turn of her wheel will on occasion check the hope and pride of her enemies ! While lying upon the back of the fox in a state of deadly panic the cock now said to him, "Sir, if I were you. I would turn upon these rustics and ask them to part company and change their course along a different direction, for after having reached the border of the forest you would make a meal of your cock in spite of all you can do". "And so will I as a matter of fact", answered the fox and just as he opened his mouth while speaking thus, the cock broke loose from his clutches and flew up into a tree. When he found himself baulked of his hope of making a meal of his prey,

He (the fox) cried out, "Alas Chanticleer, I now perceive my mistake in drawing you out of the yard in the way I did but, sir, I did it without an evil motive. Do come down, sir, I will tell you the truth".

"No, no", said, the cock, "may curses fall on us both and hang me up body, bones and all, if ever I allow myself to be cheated by you. Your flattery shall no more tempt me to sing and wink my eyes, for woe betide him that chooses to wink when he should be wide awake and be looking about him instead".

'Nay', quod the fox, 'but God yeve hym meschaunce,
That is so undiscreet of governaunce[1]
That jangleth[2] whan he sholde holde his pees'.

Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees,[3]
And necligent, and truste on flaterye.
But ye that holden this tale a folye,—
As of a fox, or a cok and hen,—
Taketh the moralite, good men ;
For Seint Paul seith that all that writen is,
To oure doctrine it is y-write,[4] y-wis[5] ;
Taketh the fruyt and lat the chaf be stille[6].
Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,
As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,
And brynge us to his heighe blisse ! Amen.[7]

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1. Lacking in self-control. 2. Talks. 3. Reckless. 4. Written. 5. Truly. 6. Take the grain and leave the chaff, 7. Be it so.

"Nay, then", said the fox, "May God send bad luck to him who would keep talking when he should be better advised to be silent instead". With these words the fox i sappeared.

So, here gentlemen, you all see the evils brought about by thoughtlessness and trust in flattery. Those of you who think the fable of a fox, cock and a hen as something very foolish and untrue, would be better advised to pay their attention to its moral. St. Paul, himself a man of learning, is of opinion that all things in writing are for our edification and enlightenment. So be advised to pick up the grain and leave the chaff. And, gracious God, if it be your will, as my saviour says, do make us all good men and bring us to heavenly bliss. May it be so !

NOTES

The Nun's Priest is one of the "three priests" of the Prologue *l.* 164.

1. **'Hoo'**—is the cry with which tournaments or such-like combats were stopped. It is, therefore, quite in the fitness of things that the knight could use this cry to stop a quarrel between the Host and the Pardoner with 'Namoore of this, for it is right ynough'. The knight is chosen to interrupt the Monk from proceeding any further wlth his dull and uninteresting tale, because the Monk is a man of high rank and the fittest person to do this is by common consent the knight being the chief figure among the assembled guests and admittedly the most courteous of the whole lot. The repetition of the expression current in colloquial use by Chaucer in his time is common enough of similar repetitions made by him in his *Knight's Tale*. *ll.* 848, 1798 and in *Troilus* IV *l.* 1242, where Criseyde cries, 'But ho ! for wee have right ynough of this'.
   Quod—said. **Sire**—lord, master. **Namoore**—no more.
2. **Ye**—you. **Ham**—have. **Seyd**—said. **Ynough**—enough. **Ywis**—certainly.
3. **Muchel**—much. **Moore**—more. **Litel**—little.
   Hevyness—depressed condition of mind.
4. **Muche**—large. **Folk**—people. **Gesse**—guess.
5. **Seye**—say. **For me**—as for me ; so far as I am concerned.
   Greet—great. **Disese**—discomfort.
   Pain—*Note* that the present meaning of the word for 'bodily ailment' was only just beginning to come into use in the age of Chaucer.

6. **Han**—have. **Welthe**—wealth. **Ese**—comfort.
7. **Heeren**—hear. **Hire**—their. **Sodyeyn**—sudden. **Fal**—fall.
8. **Contrarie**—contrary. **Joye**—joy. **Solas**—solace. **Expl**. (*ll. 2-5*)—What you have said is quite enough indeed and much more so, for a little sadness is quite enough for many people, I am sure. As for me, I say it is indeed very painful etc.
9. **Whan**—when.
   Ben—been.
   Poure—poor.
   Estaat—condition of life.
10. **Clymbeth**—climbs.
    Wexeth—grows.
    Fortunat—fortunate.
11. **There**—in that happy condition. **Abideth**—lives. **Prosperitee**—prosperity.
12. **Thynketh me**—seems to me. Note that this impersonal verb in modern English is in the form '*methinks*'. **Swich thyng**—is the old M. E. construction though *such a thing* is also found in use early in Middle English. In modern English, this latter expression is used with its plural '*such things*.'
13. **Were.......... telle**—it were good to tell.
    Note—The fall of the prosperous was a favourite theme in the Middle Ages but rather a gloomy and dull one for a festive occasion. So when the Monk is about to embark on his seventeenth tragedy after having begun his examples as far back as Lucifer, Adam, Samson, Hercules and Nero, the knight on whom falls the unpleasant task of stopping the Monk from proceeding with his disagreeable topic, calls 'Hoo' adding that the Monk's emulation of misfortune is painful to him and asks the Nun's Priest to come into the centre of the group or riders and 'Telle us swich thyng as

may oure herte glade'. So the Nun's Priest (of the 'preests thre' of the Prologue. *l.* 164) begins his merry tale of the cock and the fox.

14. **Ye**—yea, yes. **Oure**—our. **Hoost**—host *i. e*,. Harry Bailey. **Seinte Poules**—Saint Paul's (a case of the definite use of the adjective with *e*—final before a Proper Noun *Cf. Knightes Tale*, *l.* 1527.

'Of faire yonge fresshe—Venus free'

The M. E. form Poul (e) is from old French *Pol*. The spelling of the modern *Paul* has for its origin in Latin *Paulus* : In Chaucer's time, the population of the city of London was in the neighbourhood of 40,000 and old St. Paul's Cathedral was a centre of civic life. When its great bell rang, its sound could be heard from a distance. It is on record that when once during the reign of Edward II the eastern part of old St. Paul's Cathedral was being walled up, the citizens who lived within sound of its great bell, objected to it (vide Stowe : *Survey of London*, edited by Kingsford, page 325). Chaucer himself lived in or near the city.

15. **Ye**—your. **Right**—exactly. **Sooth**—truth. **Clappeth**—chatters. **Lowde**—loudly.

16. **Spak**—spoke. **Clowde**—clouds. **'Fortune...... .. clowde'**—The smiles (sunshine) of fortune were extinguished by the darkness of poverty and misery. The Host in referring to the last line of the Monk's Tale is speaking derisively of it before he was actually interrupted.

'Tragedie is noon other maner thyng ;
Ne kan in syngyyng crie ne bewaille
Bul for that Fortune alwey wol assaile
With unwar strook the regnes that ben proude :
For whan men 'trusteth hire, thanne wol she falle,
And cover hire brighte face with a clowde.'

17. **Noot**—know not. **Never**—never. **I noot...what**—I have no knowledge of what the Monk really means

and says. **Als**—also **Tragedie**—tragedy involved in the sudden and calamitous fall of a man from prosperity to poverty and destitution according to the Monk's conception.

Right........herde—exactly as you have heard just now.

19. **Pardee**—by God. **No remedie**—an echo of the opening lines of the Monk's Tale *Cf.*

    'I wol bewaille in manere of tragedie
    And fillen so that their was no remedie'

20. **Doon**—none. **That...............doon**—what is done. is done. **Peyne**—pain.

21. **Heere**—to hear. **Hevynesse**—depressing talk.

22. **Yow**—you all. **Blesse**—bless.

23. **Anoyeth**—wearies, is distasteful to. **Compnaignye**-company or crowd of assembled guests.

24. **Swich**—such. **Talkyng**—narrative of tales. **Nat**—not. **Boterflye**—butterfly (a rather *showy* creature without any essential worth). The meaning seems to be—such talk is not worth even a butterfly.

25. **Daun**-Sir. It is derived from Latin *dominus*. Chaucer makes use of the word as a title for distinguished persons of antiquity. *Cf. Daun* Pharao (*l.* 367); *Daun* Russell (l. 568). The Latin word *dominus* of which it is a corruption, is the title given to Bachelors of Arts and to any clerk in holy orders. *Cf.* Spenser's use of the well-known line refering to Chaucer himself (Dan Chaucer well of English undefiled). **Piers**—the French form of 'Peter' (Modern Pierce, Pearse etc.) *Cf. Piers* Plowman *Cf.* also Monk's Tale where the word 'daun' occurs.

    But by my truthe I knowe not youre name—
    Wher I shall I calle you my lord daun John
    Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon ?

26. **Hertely**—heartily, **Somewhat**—something. **Elles**—else.

27. **Sikerly**-certainly. **Nere**-it were not. **Nere clynkyng etc.**—were it not (had it not been) for the clinking etc. *Cf.* the description of the Monk in the Prologue–

   And whan he rood men myghte his brydel heere
   Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere
   And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle, etc.

It is to be noted that the general scheme and framework of the Canterbury Tales is not organically connected with the stories. But the links are closely joined with the general *Prologue.* It is presumed that must of the frame was written about the same time.

28. **Bridel**—bridle. **Hange**—hang. **Syde**—side.

29. **Hevene**—heaven's. This word is derived from the old feminine genitive 'heofenen'. **Kyng**–king. **By......dyde**—I swear in the name of Jesus Christ (the Lord of Heaven) who died for the sake of our salvation.

30. **Sholde**—should. **Er**—before. **Er this**—before you have related your tale. **Doun**—down **For sleepe**—to sleep.

31. **Althogh**—although. **Slough**—mud. From this we derive our knowledge of the condition of the medieval roads which were full of mud slush through which riders had to pick their way. *Cf.* also the use of the word in the preamble to the Manciple's Tale, when the drunken Cook falls off his horse. **Deepe**—deep.

32. **Thanne**—then. **All**—all. **Be**—been. **Toold**—told. **Veyn**—vain. **Thanne......veyn**—your story will fall on deaf ears, as I shall be lying asleep in the mud, lulled by the sweet jingle of your bells.

33. **Certeinly**—certainly. **That**—usually added to a conjunction in M. E. omitted in modern English.

Thise clerkes—these learned men. 'These' in M. E. expresses a class *Cf. Knightes Tale, l.* 673.

'As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres'

This use of the demonstrative (this, these) is common in M. E (middle English) but this does not mean that the 'clerkes' are particularised.

34. **Where**—in the event of. **Noon**—no.

35. **Noght**—nothing. **Helpeth**—helps. **Sentence**—utterance. **Where ....sentence**—it is useless waste of speech of a lecturer to continue his lectures when he finds his audience thinning away.

36. **Woot**—know. **Substance**—stuff. **And......be**—And I know well indeed that I have in me the stuff of a good listener, if the story is well told. Evidently the Host wants a hunting story in which case he can appreciate it. *Cf.* the Monk's qualifications as a hunter in the *Prologue, ll.* 178., 198 ff. This Monk was not at all interested in his real job *i. e.*, work in monastery. He bothered little about that text that says that hunters aro not holy men or that a monk spending very little of his time in the cloister, is like a fish without water. He attaches little value to such a text. This is how Chaucer exposes the worldiness and materialism of the Monk through his genial humour. **The substance... ... me**—The essence of the matter rested with the Host whose decision or verdict as 'juge and reportour' would be final in the contest (story-telling) in order to select which of them should get the prize for the best story-teller.

38. **Somewhat**—something. **Hunting**—hunting. **Preye**—prey.

39. **Pleye**—play. **I have .....pleye**—I am in no mood for fun. *Cf.* Knightes Tale, *l.* 1127.

40. **Lat**—allow. **Now lat... ..toold**—Let somebody else

be given a chance to tell his tale as well as I have told mine.

41. **Rude**—rough, homely. **Blood**—hold. **Speche**—speech.

42. **Seyde unto**—addressed. **Nonnes Preest**—one of the three priests (Prologue *l*. 164) who were attending on the First Nun *i. e.*, the Prioress.

43. **Com Neer**—come nearer (the true comparative of *nigh*) **Hyder**—hither. **Sir John**—an old and generic nickname for a priest, who was properly addressed as '*Sir*' but here it appears to be a real name (*Cf. l.* 54). Except for Chaucer himself and Harry Bailey, the Host, few pilgrims were given surnames. The practice of addressing persons by their surnames is a comparatively late development.

Note that the use of 'thou' by the priest surely accounts for the Host's 'rude speche and boold'.

But when the Host talks to the Prioress, he addresses her in the more polite plural.

44. **Hertes**—hearts. **Glade**—gladden.

45. **Blithe**—cheerful. **Ryde**—ride. **Jade**—a small horse. Why is the Nun's Priest represented by Chaucer as mounting a pony and rather scraggy horse if he was in attendance on the fashionable Prioress? Perhaps it is because Chaucer really thinks of him as a humble priest who would be likely to hire his horse for the Canterbury pilgrimage and the inn-keeper would put him off with the worst horse in the stable. Besides, this thin and bony horse is introduced by Chaucer to make the picture sharp.

46. **Thyn**—your. **Hors**—horse. **Bothe**—both. **Foul**—wretched. **Lene**—lean.

47. **Wol**—will. **Rekke**—care. **Nat**—not. **Bene**—bit.

48. **Looke**—see. **Murie**—merry. **Evermo**—always.

49. **Yis**—yes ; emphatic form of *ye*. **Moot**—must. **So moot I go**—so may I go—so may I enjoy the use of my legs.

50. **I...blamed**—it will be my fault if......"
or I shall be to blame if...... . "

51. **Attamed—**begun.

52. **Everichon**—everyone.

53. **Sweete**—sweet-mannered. **Sir John—**John is a name contempt.

54. **Povre—**poor. **Wydwe—**widow. **Somdel—**somewhat.
Stape—advanced in years or well on in years. Cf. *Merchant's Tale* (*l*. 1514). The word *stapo* comes from O. E. *gestepen* (p. p. of *staeppan*—step).

55. **Whilom—**once upon a time. **Dwellyng**—living. **Narwe—**narrow. **Cotage**—cottage.

56. **Greve**—grave. **Stondynge—**standing. **Dale—**valley.

57. **Which**—whom.

58. **Syn**—since. **Thilke—**same. **Wyf**—wife. **Syn...a wyf**—since the day of her husband's death. Widows in the medieval age mostly, got themselves married very quickly. The word 'last' suggests that the widow had married more than once. The wife of Bath had married five times.

59. **Paciance—**patience. **Ladde—**lad. **Ful**—full. **Symple—**simple. **Lyf**—life.

60. **Litel—**little. **Hir**—her. **Catel**—goods or property. **Rente—**income. **Hir catel and hir rente—**her goods (property) and her income. **For litel........... rente—**for her property and her revenues were small. Note that there is no allusion to the rent of the cottage.

61. **Housbondrie—**husbandry *i. e.*, economy.
Swich—such. **Sente—**sent.

62. **Foond**—provided. This word is still used in this sense in modern English *e. g.* the caretaker.

The caretaker of the house is to find himself in board and no fuel. He is paid £ 200 a year and finds himself. The terms are "£ 50 and all found." **Eek**—also. **Doghtren**—daughters. **By housbondrei ... .two**—By effecting careful economy in managing the expenses of the household the widow provided (found) for herself and her two daughters also.

63. **Sowes**—sows. **And namo**—empty phrases like these are always handy to Chaucer for rime-making. Note that the poet uses them less in the rimed couplet than in the more difficult stanza forms Examples of such other phrases are as follow : *by that God above ll.* 143, 151 ; *Pardee l.* 162 ; *for Doddes owene love l.* 188 ; *I can* say you namoore *l.* 203.

64. **Keen**—cows. **Highte**—called.

65. **Sooty**—black as or with soot and smoke, there being no chimney in those days.

Bour—bed-room. **Halle**—living room. **His bour... Halle**—Her cottage consisted of two rooms *viz*, the *bower* or bed-room and the *hall* or living room. The living room (the hall of a rich man's house) could by no stretch of the imagination be an elegant room, because Chanticleer and his six hens roosted there at night. It was black with soot and smoke, because in those days buildings of poor people were not provided with chimneys. The smoke passed through a hole in the roof. Notice carefully the mock-heroic note in the humorous exaggeration in respect of bower and the *hall* of a noble man's house.

66. **Eet**—ate. **Sklendre**—slender. **Meet**—meal.

67. **Peynaunt**—pungent. **Sauce**—a kind of liquid added food gives piquancy or relish to eating.

Deel—much. **Of........deel**—the poor widow got

too little food to eat to need any sauce to give her additional relish for it. Contrast the Franklin of whom it is said (*Prologue, l.* 352) 'Wo was his cook out but if has sauce were nat Poynaunt and sharpe.'

68. **Deyntee**—dainty. **Thurgh**—through. **Throte**—throat.

69. **Diete**—diet. **Accordant**—according. **Cote**—cottage. **In ... .cote**—her dress was in keeping with her cottage. Notice that Chaucer has not enlightened us to the dress of the widow although he has stated that her cottage was "narrow".

70. **Repleccioun**—excessive eating. **Sik**—sick. The sentence means that she was free from all those diseases and ailments which result from excessive eating.

71. **Attempree**—temperate. **Phisik**—medicine. The line means that her temperate diet was all the medicine she took to keep herself healthy.

72. **Exercise**—hard work. **Suffisaunce**—contentment. **Hertes suffisaunce**—contentment of heart or peace of mind. Although the poor widow could not exercise her choice in respect of her diet or food, the contentment she brought to it was her own. Notice how these expressions throw light on the context.

73. **Goute**—gout. **Daunce**—dance. **The goute........ ...daunce**—The gout did not stop her dancing at all *i. e.* she was not at all worried by gouty feet as was very often the case with her richer neighours. **Lette**—hindered.

74. **Napoplexie**—no apoplexy. **Shente**—tormented. **Heed**—head.

75. **Wyn**—wine. **Whit**—white. **Reed**—red. **Neither with ne reed**—*Cf.* Piers Plowman B. Prologue 228 "Whit wyn of Oseye (Alsace) and red wyn of Gascoigne.

76. **Bord**—board. **Blak**—black. **Whit and black**—as a contrast to '*whit ne reed*' (in respect of wine) in the preceding line. Perhaps a proverbial expression for austerity meals, which had to be severely simple for poor people.

77. **Broun**—brown. **Breed**—bread. **Foond**—found. **Lak**—lack. **Milk......... lak**—she found nothing lacking in respect of milk and brown bread, which were the two chief items in her monotonous fare. In this connection, one is reminded of the oft-quoted proverb—"What the eye doesn't see, the belly doesn't grieve over."

78. **Seynd**—smoked, singed. **Bacoun**—bacon. **Somtyme**—sometime. **Eg**—egg. **Tweye**—two.

79. **As it were**—so to speak. **Maner**—kind. **Deye**—dairykeeper. Originally, the word 'deye' meant a kneader or breadmaker. It is used here in the sense of a woman engaged about a farm. **Seynd..... deye** smoked bacon with an egg or two on certain occasions, constituted her dinner with brown bread and milk, for she was, so to speak, a kind of dairy-keeper *i. e.* one who kept poultry.

80. **Yeerd**—yard. **A yeerd etc**—Notice that Chaucer does not make much of the fencing round about the widow's cottage here, unlike the *Roman de Renart* where a good deal is about the fencing because there the hero is the fox who has to overcome this obstacle in the path of his victim. Here Chaucer is content with nothing the mere existence of the fence.

81. **Stikkes**—sticks. **Drye**—dry. **Dych**—ditch. **Withoute**—without.

82. **Cok** - cock. **Heet**—called. **Chauntecleer**—the proper name of the cock, the hero of the tale. It suggests a cock who can sing or chant in a clear voice. The earliest occurrence of the name in English is in the *Vox and the Wolf* about 1300.

83. **Nas**—was not. **Peer**—equal. **Of crowyng nas his peer**—there was not his equal in crowing. Note that in Middle English in which Chaucer wrote, the temporary subject 'there' or 'it' is often dropped.

84. **Voys**—voice. **Murier**—merrier. **Orgon**—a set of organpipes.
Messe dayes—Mass is the celebration of the Eucharist with ceremony and music. Mass was said every day in all large churches, but here, as in Christmas-day the word mass-day means a feast or festival on which it is the duty of a layman to hear mass.
Chirche—church. **Gon** play. **His .....gon**—his voice was pleasanter (to hear) than the sweet-toned organs (those) that play in the church on religious or festive occasions and feast-days.

85. **Silkerer**—punctual. **Ogge**—lodging, yard.

86. **Clokke**—clock. **Abbey**—church. **Or logge**—an instrument for telling the time possibly a sun-dial, as opposed to a clock. References to vertical sun-dials on the walls of old English churches are to be found in Mrs. Gatty's *Book of Sandials* (Chapter IV).

87. **Ech**—each. **Ascencioun**—ascension.

88. **Equynoxial**—"The equinoctial which is the celestial equator, an imaginary circle through the heavens so-called, because, when the sun is on it, the nights and days are of equal length in all parts of the world" (Pollard) "the Right Ascension of the sun or a star is the degree of the equinoctial reckoned from the first point in Aries, which rises with it in a right sphere, or which comes with it in the meridian" 'N. E. D.' The cock knew as if by instinct the positions of each of the imaginary points. So he was able to crow every hour according to siderial time. Chaucer says that the cock knew the hour

better than the abbey clock according to a common popular belief of the time.

89. **Whan..... ascended**—The cock crowed exactly every hour. Light sleepers within hearing distance from him were full of admiration for his moderation.

90. **It myghte......amended**—so that it could not be bettered *i. e.*, perfectly and accurately.

91. **Coomb**—comb. **Fyn—**fine. **Coral—**a kind of red precious stone used as a bead.

92. **Batailled**—embattled or furnished with battlements which are temporary or movable turrets erected on walls when besieged by the enemy's forces. **Castel** —castle. **Wal**—wall.

93. **Byle**—bill or beak not his bile. **Jeet**—jet (a kind of hard coal). **Shoon**—shone.

94. **Asure**—azure, sky-blue. **Legges**—legs. **Toon**—toes.

95. **Nayles**—nails. **Lylye**—lily. **Flour**—flower.

96. **Burned gold**—bright golden.

97. **Gentil cok**—gentle cock. Notice carefully that Chaucer maintains throughout his description of the cock this mock-heroic tone. Just as we are accustomed to talk of 'gentleman' so his cock must also be a 'gentle cock'. **Governaunce**—rule, government.

98. **Sevene**—seven (to be pronounced as a monosyllable). **Hennes**—hens. **Doon**—do. **Pleasunce** —pleasure. **For to......pleasaunce**—in order to cater for all kinds of joy and comfort.

99. **Sustres**—sisters. **Paramours**—lovers.

100. **Wonder lyk to hym**—bearing close resemblance to him wonderfully. **As of colours**—in regard to their colouring. Here 'as' may be rendered 'in respect of' but when we compare its use with such phrases '*as for that nyght*' it has practically no meaning.

101. **Hewed**—coloured. **Faireste**—fairest. **The faireste ....throte**—who had the brightest feathers round about her throat. The picture of the hero (cock) presented here is one of an old-fashioned may-coloured barndoor-fowl and not one of the modern pure breeds.

102. **Cleped**—called. **Damoysele**—damsel.

103. **Curteys**—courteous. **Discreet**—prudent. **Debonaire**—gracious.

104. **Compaignable**—sociable. **Bar**—bore.

105. **Nyght**—night. **Oold**—old.

106. **Trewely**—truly. **Hoold**—hold.

107. **Loken**—locked. **Lith**—limb. **That......lith**—*i. e.*, he loved every bit of her. She has in her custody the heart of Chanticleer (whose) every limb (was) bound fast by ties of love so that his happiness was complete.

108. **Wel......therwith**—it was well with him ; he was happy when he was with her ; his love brought him happiness.

109. **Here**—hear. **Hem**—them. **Synge**—sing. Note that Chaucer ascribes human qualities to Chanticleer and Pertelote—the knight and her lady. The behaviour of the former is like that of a 'prince in a hall'. Though he is the songster, both can sing snatches of an old English song 'in sweete accord'. Even a shirt and a heard are ascribed to Chaucer's mock-heroic epic. **Swiche a joye was it**—Note the absolute use of 'such' to express intensity of emotion. It is now preserved in the colloqualism—it was such fun.

110. **That**—no meaning in modern English when preceded by when.

111. '**My life is faren in londe**'–this is the first line of a

song discovered by Professor Skeat in a MSS at Trinity College, Cambridge :

'My life is faren in lond ;
Allas ! why is she so ?
And I am so sore bound
I may nat com her to.
She hath my herte in hold
Where ever she ryde or go,
With trew love a thousand fold'

Notice that the line 'she hath my herte in hold' is but an echo of the fifth line of the song, with which Chaucer's contemporaries must have been familiar. **Accord**—harmony. **Faren**—fared, travelled. **Gan**—began. **Sprynge**—spring. **Brighte**—bright.

113. **Beestes**—beasts. **Briddles**—birds. **Koude**—could. **Speake**—speak.

114· **Bifel**—befell. **Dawenynge**—dawing.

116. **Perche**—perch. **Halle**—drawing-room.

118. **Gan**—began. **Gronen**—groan.

119. **As man that**—'Like one who.' Here *man* is used an indefinite pronoun like 'one. **Dreem**—dream. **Deeched**—troubled. **Soore**—painfully.

120. **Herde**—hard. **Hym**—him. **Roore**—roar.

121. **Agast**—frightened. **Herte**—heart. **Deere**—dear.

122. **Eyleth**—aileth. **Manere**—manner.
What eyleth............manere—what makes you suffer and groan in this manner ?

123. **Ye been**—you have been. **Verray**—real. **Slepere**—sleeper. Ye......**slepere**—a fine sleeper you are. **Fy**—fie.

124. **Answerde**—answered.

125. **Take......agrief**—do not take in amiss of unkindly.

126. **Me mette**—I dreamed. **Meschief**—trouble.
I pray..... meschief—I pray you please do not be offended. I dreamed that I was in such trouble.

127. **Right**—just. **Yet**—still, even how. **Myn**—my. **Afright**—afraid.

128. **Swevene**—dream. **Recche**—interpret.
Aright—favourably (so that it may not portend evil).

129. **Foule**—vile. **Prisoun**—prison.
Kepe...........prisoun—protect my body against unwholesome confinement.

130. **Romed**—walked. **Doun**—down.

131. **Withinne**—inside. **Wheer**—where. **Saugh**—saw **Beest**--beast.

132. **Lyk an hound**—like a hunting dog. **Wolde**—would. **Arrest**—arrest.

133. **Dend**—dead. **Han had me deed**—would have killed me. **Wheer......deed**—where I saw a beast (that) was like a dog, and that would have seized me and killed me. Notice that in early English the relative is often omitted but relation is indicated by juxtaposing the principal and relative causes.

134. **Bitwixe**—between. **Yelow**—yellow. **Reed**—red.

135. **Tipped**—spotted. **Tayl**—tail. **Bothe**—both. **Eeris**—ears.

136. **Remenant**—rest. **Heeris**—hairs. **Tipped......heris**—his ears and tail were lined with sable for unlike the rest of his hair.

137. **Snowte**—nose. **Smal**—slim. **Glowynge**—glowing. **Eyen**—eyes. **Tweye**—two.

138. **His look**—'It is hard to decide whether this means 'the expression of his eyes' or the whole appearance of the beast—the look of him—(K. Sisam).
Almoyst—almost. **Deye**—die. **Yet......deye**—Even now I die with fright at the thought of his terrible look.

139. **Doutelees**—doubtless. **This......doutelees**—I am certain it is this that has caused me so much trouble and fright,

140. **Avoy**—alas ! **Fy**—shame. **Hertelees**—coward,

141. **By that God above**—In the name of God who

dwells above ('that' is meaningless here).

142. **Now .....love**—Now you have forfeited my affections and lost my love.

143. **Kan**—can. **Feith**—faith.

144. **Certes**--certainly. **What.........seith**—Whatever a woman may say—irrespective of what she may think.

145. **Alle**—all. **Desiren**—desire. **If......be**—if it is possible.

146. **Housbondes**—husbands (who hold the bond of the house).

147. **Secree**—shrewd. **Nygard**—miser. **Ne no**—nor.

148. **Tool**—trifle. **Agast..... tool**—afraid of every little trifle.

149. **Noon**—nor. **Avauntour**—braggart, boaster who brags success in love.

150. **Dorste**—dsre.
Shame .....after—Shame on your love that any trifling thing can frighten you out of your wits and put you out of your manly courage.

152. **Mannes**—men's. **Berd**—beard. **Have ye........ berd**—Have you no manly courage to match your beard ? Note the mock-heroic tone of the remark.

153. **Konne**—cah. **Been**—be. **Agast**—afraid.

154. **Nothyng**—nothing. **Woot**—knows. **Vanitee**—vanity of emptiness (in its etymological sense).

155. **Swevenes**—dreams. **Engendren**—engenders.
Repleccioums—repletion or excessive eating or abundance of one of the four humours.

156. **Oft**—often. **Fume**—a vapour or a kind of exhalation or excrement of the body, *i. e.*, noxious vapour formerly supposed to rise to the brain from the undigested food in the stomach—N. E. D.
Compleccioums—bodily constitution or temperament or collection of humours. The body was supposed to be the home of four elements, excess of any one of which caused physical ailments or humours.

Literally it means "complexion" in the medieval sense determined in one of two ways *viz.*, (1) by the combination of supposed qualities (cold or hot and moist or dry) in the required proportion or (2) by the cumulative action of four cardinal "humours" or bodily moistures (*viz.*, blood, phlegm, choler and black choler in a certain proportion.

Been—have been. **Habundant**—abundant. **Wight**—person.

158. **Met**—dreamed.

159. **Grete**—great. **Superfluytee**—excess.

160. **Red colera**—red choler, or somewhat yellow bile (one of the four "Humours") as opposed to the black bile or melancholy. The excess of any 'humour' was considered to cause disease (bad temper in particular).

According to medieval pathology, 'melancholy' *i. e.* habitual feeling of sadness and depression, was attributed to an excess of black bile. The principal fluids that regulate the physical body are blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile, known as the four 'humours'. The excess of any one 'humour' was supposed to cause 'dreams' in which the corresponding colour occurred *i. e.* those who were of a choleric disposition with 'red colera' in excess dreamt of fiery red things while those in whom "melancolie" was in excess dreamt "dreadful dark dreams".

Here Chanticleer has dreamt of a beast 'betwixe yelow and reed' with black marking from which it follows he is suffering from excess of yellow red and black bile. So the obvious treatment of his condition will be to purge him of choler and melancholy.

Pardee a form of oath (by God).

161. **Folk**—people. **Dreden**—dread. **Hir**—their.

162. **Arwes**—arrows. **Fyr**—fire. **Rede**—red. **Lemes**—flames.

163. **Wol**—will. **Hem**—them. **Byte**—bite. **That they**—which.

164. **Conteks**—contests. **Whelps**—cries of a dog. **Lyte**—light (little).

162-164. Note that 'fire with red flames' and 'red beasts' are obviously dreams arising out of 'rede colera' (one of the four humours of the body). 'Humour' is a kind of fluid of the body. As already mentioned, the *cardinal humours* are blood, phlegm, choler and melancholy, supposed in the Middle Ages to determine physical and mental qualities. The word *Contekes* comes from Contek, a monster with a 'bloody knife and sharp menace' meaning, 'scenes of violence' while the commest dogs (whelpes) may have been yellowish-red in colour but more likely a dog-fight troubled the sleeper. By *arrows*, perhaps fiery arrows are meant. (K. S.)

167. **Beres**—bears. **Boles**—bulls.

168. **Develes**—devils. **Or elles......take**—or else black devils (who) attempt to seize them.

170. **Werken**—work. **Wo**—trouble: **That......wo**—that cause so much distress to the sleeper.

172. **Lo**—see. **Catoun**—Dionysius Cato, supposed to have written the *Disticha Catonis* (a collection of moral sayings in Latin) in the 14th century. It was in current use in the grammar schools up till the 17th century.

Caxton published it in 1483 translated from the French and expressed the opinion that "it is the best book to be taught to young children in school John of Salisbury also tells us that it was a work in which school children were regularly instructed in the precepts of virtue. The particular line referred to here is in Book II, Disticha Catonis 32 where it is advised '*ne do no fors of dremes*' *i. e.* attach no importance to dreams.

173. **Fors**—force. **Ne......dremes**—do not attach the least weight or importance to dreams.

174. **Flee**—fly. **Fro**—from. **Bemes** beams of the cottage on which the birds roosted.

175. **Taak**--take. **As taak**—take (a form of the imperative common enough in Chaucer) **Laxatyf**—laxative.

176. **Up**—upon **Peril**—risk. **Lyf**—life.

177. **Conseille**—counsel. **Beste**—best **Wol**—will. **Nat**—not. **Lye**—lie.

178. **Colere**—choler (humour of the body). **Melancolye**-melancholy.

179. **Purge** clean. **Tarie**—delay. **For ye**—so that.

180. **Noon apothecarie**—no physician or chemist. It is indeed a fact that many English towns in the Middle Ages had no physician worth the name.

181. **Herbes**—medicinal plants. **Techen**—direct or guide.

182. **Shul been**—should be. **Heele**—health. **Prow**—benefit.

183. **Tho**—those. **Fynde**—find out.

184. **Hire**—their. **Propretee**—special attribute or quality. **Kynde**—kind. **The.........kynde**—which naturally arise out of their special virtue with power to purge you upwards and downwards (K. S).

185 **Bynethe**—beneath. **Eek**—also.

187. **Been**—have been **Complecicoun**—temperament.

188. **Ware**-beware. **Sonne**-sun. **Ascencioun**—ascension.

189. **Repleet**—full. **Humours hoote**—hot humours *i. e.* choler. Note that according to medieval conception, humours could be hot and cold—dry and moist. Choler is hot and dry humour whereas blood, hot and moist. Note also that complexion is used by Chaucer here in the narrow sense of colour and texture of the skin of the face which is regarded as

index of the complexion which is the resultant product of the blending of the bodily homours. **Ware......hoote**—Beware lest the sun should find you full of hot humours with the increase of his attitude during summer.

190. **Do**—does. **Dar**—dare. **Wel**—well. **Leye**—lay. **Grote**—a coin worth about a penny. **I dar.........** **...grote**—a form of oath (meaning "I am ready to lay or risk a penny".)

191. **Fevere**-fever. **Terciane**–fever increasing in intensity every other day, as distinguished from *quotidian* (every day) and *quartan* (every fourth day). Langland in his *Piers Plowman* (A. XII—8285) makes mention of these three kinds of medieval fevers.

192. **Agu**—ague. **Bane**—death ; cause of ruin ; calamity.

193. **Digestyves**—digestives. The correct medieval procedure adopted by physicians was to prescribe digestives to clear away the humours before purgatives and other herbs.

194. **Wormes**—worms. After the worms are taken by the patient as a digestive (to promote digestion of food with an eye to the habits of the birds)
The following herbs were used as laxatives :

195-197. (1) **Lawriol**—the spurge laurel "to purge a man of fume and of the choler".

(2) **Centaure**—used to purge choler and phlegm.

(3) **Fumetere**—used to purge melancholy. It was supposed to possess the virtue of opening the liver and of cleaning a man's blood.

(4) **Ellebor**—of which the black variety purged choleric black humours while the white was used against phlegm, making the patient purge upward by vomitting.

(5) **Ketapuce**—which had the virtue of purging the fumes especially the melancholic and choleric humours.

(6) **Gaitrys beryis**—a strong purgative, effective against choler (K. S).

198. **Herbe-yve**—buck's horn with the medicinal property of plantains, given to cure jaundice and tertian fevers. **Mery**—pleasant, used ironically. **Ther**—where. **In our......is**—in that pleasant spot in our yard. The word 'mery' expresses pleasantness c situation.

199. **Pekke**—pick. **Hem**—them. **Ete**—eat. **Yn**—ii **Pekke... ......yn**—Note the conversational freedom of Chaucer's later verse.

200. **Myrie**—merry. **Housbonde**—husband. **Kyn**—stock. **For youre fader kyn**—for the sake of your father's stock. **Fader**—the uninflicted genetive. Note that Chanticleer was proud of his race and the fox too harped on the same thing in order to flatter him.

201. **I ....na moore**—I can tell you nothing more. **Dredeth no dreem**-in this last line, Dame Pertelote makes use of the plural of polite entreaty after scolding her husband in the familiar singular throughout her long speech.

202. **Graunt mercy**—many thanks. Cf. "Gramerey" (Coleridge). **Loore**—learning.

203 **Nathelees**—nevertheless. **Touchyng**—regarding. **Daun**—master. **Sir**—a title formerly given to graduates in theology, and later to graduates indiscriminately. Here it is used merely as a compliment (Cp. lines 4323 and 4524). The word is from Latin *Dominus*—Sir. **Catoun**—Cato, whose authority was quoted by Pertelote.

204. **Wysdom**—learning. **Renoun**—renown.

205. **That**—That has no meaning here. It is omitted in modern English.

206. **Rede**—read.

207. **Auctorie**—authority.

208. **So moot I thee**—so may I prosper. **Moot** (O. E. *mot*) is the verb from which our *must* is derived. Its older meaning is 'may' (as in this sentence). **Thee**—prosper.

209. **Revers**—reverse. **Sentence**—judgment, opinion. **That......sentence**—who expresses the contrary opinion. **Al the revers**—quite the contrary.

210. **Han**—have. **Founden**—confirmed.

211. **Been**—have been. **Significacions**—significations *i. e.*, premonitions.

In the medieval period curiosity about the meaning of dreams and their interpretations gave rise to an important branch of popular literature *viz.*, dream-books. Dreams prognosicate evil. The dream of being attacked by a beast or a quadruped, was regarded as a bad omen foretelling evil. There are references to dreams in Chaucer's "*House of Fame*" and *Troilus* (V. 358. ff)—also in *Roman de la Rose*.

212. **Tribulaciouns**—tribulations.

213. **Folk**—people. **Enduren**—endure. **Lif**—life.

214. **Noon**—no. **Nedeth**—needs. **Ther......argument** – The subject admits of no discussion.

215. **Preeve**—proof. **Sheweth**—shows. **In dede**—in fact. **The verray......dede**—the proof is provided by experience or showed by actual test or trial ; it is a question of fact, not argument.

216. **Oon**—one. **Gretteste**—greatest. **Auctour**—authors ; authorities. **Oon .. auctour**—The author referred to here may be either Cicero who in his work on "Divination" tells both stories in reverse order or more probably the author may be Valerius Maximus. The latter borrows from the former and it is difficult to say to which of them Chaucer refers here. It may

also be just possible that Chaucer had the stories neither from Cicero nor Valerius but from some medieval source in which the classical source was quoted (K. S).

217. **Whilom**—once (A dative plural used adverbially). **Felawes**—companions. **Wente**—went.

218. **On pilgrimage**—This is a medieval touch which Ghaucer has added either intentionally or from the version of the story which it is taken. **Entente**—intention.

219. **Happed**—happened. **Comen**—come.

220. **Congregacioun**—congregation or crowd of people.

221. **Peple**—people. **Streit**—strait : narrow. **Herbergage**—lodging. **A toun......herbergage**—a town where many people had collected and as such, it was short of accommodation.

222. **Ne founde**—did not find. O—a. **Cotage**—cottage.

223. **Y-logged**—lodged.

224. **Wherfore**—therefore. **Mosten**—must. **Necessitee**—neccessity.

225. **Nyght**–night. **Departen compaignye**—part company, separate.

226. **Gooth**—goes. **Hosterlye**—inn.

227. **Loggyng**—lodging. **As it wolde falle**—just as it happened.

228. **Stalle**—stall.

229. **Fer in a yeerd**—far down a yard meaning that he was too far away from the house and the street and as such, far from help.

231. **Aventure**—chance.

232. **As in commune**—all as one community.

216-232. Chaucer expands the simple statement in Cicero and Valerius, *viz.*, the two men were on their way to Megura, where they spent the night, one of them

with a friend and the other at an inn, so as to suit medieval conditions.

233. **Er**—before. **And so.. ... day**—dreams experienced before daybreak are supposed to come true.

234. **Mette**—dreamed.

237. **Mordred**—murdered. **Ther**—where. **Lye**—lie. **This........ mordered**—This apparition foretells events not known to the man it stands for—both as regards the coming murder and the attempt to get the dead body outside the town.

240. **Feere**—fear. **Abrayde**—rose with a start from his sleep.

242. **Turned hym**—turned himself while in sleep. **Keepe**—account. **Took......keepe**—paid no attention to it.

243. **Hym thoughte**—he thought. **Nas**—nothing. **Vanitee**—vanity.

244. **Twies**—twice. **Slepyng**—sleeping. **Dremed**—dreamed. **Hee**—he.

245. **Atte**—at. **Thridde**—third.

246. **Cam**—came. **Seide**—said. **Slawe**—slain.

247. **Bihoold**—behold. **Woundes**—wounds. **Depe**—deep. **Wyde**—wide.

248. **Arys**—arise. **Morwe**—morning. **Tyde**—time.

250. **Carte**—cart. **Donge**—dung. **Shaltow**—shalt thou.

251. **Hid**—concealed. **Prively**—privately.

252. **Thilke**—same. **Arresten**—arrested. **Boldely**—boldly **Do..... arresten**—have the cart stopped or cause it to be stopped or detained or arrested.

253. **Sooth to sayn**—truly speaking.

255. **Pitous**—piteous. **Hewe**—hue.

256. **Truste wel**—believe me. **Foond**—found. **Ful trewe**—perfectly true.

258. **In**—inn. **Fleawes in**—the inn where his friend had been staying.

260. **After......calle**—he began to shout for his companion.

261. **Answerde**—answered. **Anon**—at once.

262. **Agon**—gone away. It has a double meaning : (1) departed ; (2) dead.

263. **As......toun**—he went outside the town at daybreak.

264. **Suspecioun**—suspicion. **Fallen..... suspecioun**—to entertain suspicions.

265. **Remembrynge**—remembering. **On**—of.

266. **Forth**—forthwith. **No.........lette**—no longer would he delay.

268. **As ...... lond**—as if the cart was driven to some dung-country.

269. **Arrayed**—arranged. **Wise**—manner.

270. **Ye**—you. **Han**—have. **Dede**—dead. **Devyse**—describe.

271. **With .....herte**—boldly.

272. **Felonye**—murder. **Gan......felonye**—began to cry for justice and revenge due to his criminal action.

274. **Lith gapyng upright**—face upwards with mouth open *i. e.*, with the jaw dropped in death.

275. **Minsitres**—ministers of justice or administrators of the town.

276. **Sholden**—conveys a reproach. **Reulen**—rule. **That... ...citee**—whose duty it is to administer the city and maintain peace and order.

277. **Harrow**—a cry for distress. **Lith**—lies.

278. **What sholde I**—why should I. **Unto this tale**—what need I add more to this tale ?

279. **Peple out sterte**—people started out of their homes. **Caste ....grounde**—turned the cart upside down.

280. **Myddel**—middle.

281. **Newe**—fresh, recently.

282. **Blisful**—blessed.

283. **Lo**—look. **Biwreyest**—betrays. **Lo......alway**—'murder will be out' is a medieval belief which lasted till the 17th century. Vide *Prioress Tale* B. 1766.

284. **Wol**—will. **That......day**—which we see illustrated in our daily life.

285. **Wlatsom**—horrible or loathsome. **Abhomynable**—abominable, hateful.

287. **suffre**—suffer. **Heled**—hidden.

288. **Adyde**—remain hidden.

289. **Conclusioun**—judgement.

291. **Hent**—seized. **So............pyned**—they tormented him so deeply.

292. **Eek**—also. **Hostiler**—inn-keepes. **Engyned**—cross examined. It seems, Chaucer followed foreign authorities in this matter of the medieval use of tortures to extort confessions from suspects, as will be clear from the following from Chamber's Encyclopaedia. "The use of tortures seems always to have been repugnant to the genius of the law of England : though occasionally used by an exercise of prerogative, it may be doubted whether it was ever recognised as lawful in the ordinary course of the administration of justice. It was employed by royal warrant in the Templar trials (1310), and we are told that till that time it was unknown in England. During Queen Elizabeth's time torture to extort confessions was resorted to only in the case of State prisoners and as late as 1646 —on witches.

293. **Biknewe**—confessed. **Hire**—their. **Wikkednesse**—villainy, wickedness.

294. **An-hanged**—hanged. **Nekke**—neck. **Bon**—bone. **Nekkebon**—collar-bone.

295. **Dremes......drede**—dreams are to be dreaded.

296. **Certes**—cetrainly. **Rede**—read. •

297. **Chapitre**—chapter. **Right......this**—"in Cicero, Chaucer's second story precedes the first while in Valerius it occurs several sections earlier. Most probably, Chaucer was writing from memory or he took the story from some intermediary in which they were rearranged" (K. S.)

298. **Gabbe**—talk loosely. **So have......blis**—so may I enjoy as I hope to do so.

299. **See**—sea. **Two men......see**—"In the orginal storry there is only one man the Greek poet Sinonides (B.C. 556-467) who does not come by land to a seaport, but leaves his ship to visit a port, finds a dead body on the shore, gives it the burial to which the Greeks attached so much importance, and is warned by the grateful ghost to discontinue his voyage."

300. **Fer contree**—distant country.

301. **Wynd**—wind. **Contrarie**—unfavourable.

302. **For to tarie**—to tarry.

303. **That......myrie**—that was pleasantly situated. **Heven**—port. **Upon an haven syde**—by the sea-shore.

304. **Agayn the even-tyde**—at the approach of evening.

305. **Gan chaunge, and blew**—changed and blew. **As hem leste**—as it pleased them.

306. **Jolif**—full of joy. **Wente .....reste**—went to take rest.

307. **Casten hem**—made up their minds.

308. **O**—one. **Fil**—fell. **Mervaille**—marvel.

310. **Oon**—one. **Hym mette**—he dreamed. **Wonder**—used as adjective. **Agayn the day**—just before daybreak. Dreams after midnight were more

prophetic and significant than dreams in the early part of the night.

311. **By his beddes syde**—by the bed-side.

By omitting all reference to the service rendered to the dead man the ghost's intervention is made purely gratuitous. Evidently, Chaucer seems to be feeling a little difficulty here. This is clear from the fact that he cuts the warning short.

312. **Comanded**—commanded. **Abyde**—stay.

313. **Tomorwe**—tomorrow. **Wende**—went.

314. **Dreynt**—drowned. **My... ende**—that is all I would like to narrate.

316. **Wook**—woke.

316. **Preyde**—prayed. **Viage**—voyage. **Lette**—postpone.

317. **Byde**—abide. **As**—just.

318. **That lay......syde**—Evidently, they shared a room but Chaucer says so because it is convenient to respect the rime of *l.* 4269.

319. **Gan for to laughe**—began to laugh. **Scorned...... ...faste**—poured scorn upon him.

320. **No dreem......agaste**—he said, no dream could so terrify my heart.

321. **That.........thynges**—that I will put off doing my business **Thynges**—business, as used by Chaucer.

322. **I sette......dremynges**—I care not a straw for all your dreams.

323. **Swevenes**—dreams. **Japes**—tricks.

324. **Alday**—every day. **Owles or of apes**—owls were birds of ill-omen but *apes* are probably mentioned for rhyming with *japes*.

325. **Maze**—wild or confused fancy. **Therwithal**—along with it.

326. **Ne shal**—nor shall be.

327. **Sith**—since. **Wolt**—will (determination of the speaker).

328. **Forslewthen**—waste. **Tyde**—time. **Forslewthen wilfully thy tyde**—wilfully fritter away your time in idleness so sloth.

329. **Woot**—knows. **Reweth**—grieves. **And good day**—so farewell (a form of leave-taking).

330. **Leve**—leave.

331. **Er**—before. **Y-seyled**—sailed.

332. **Noot I nat why**—I know not why. **Ne**—nor. **Myschaunce**—accident. **It**—the ship. **Eyled**—failed.

333. **Casuelly**—by some mischance. Events in a dream often seem to be casual. But here Chaucer uses the word in its root meaning (by chance).

335. **In......bisyde**—It is to be wondered at that other ships sailing alongside of this one did not sink.

336. **Hem**—the ship and its crew. **Seyled**—sailed. **Tyde**—time.

337. It is certainly true Chaucer had put us in mind of the fact that the cock was the speaker.

338. **Ensamples**—examples. **Maistow**—mayst thou. **Leere**—learn.

339. **Been to**—be so. **Reccheless**—reckless.

340. **Doutelees**—doubtless.

341. **That........drede**—that many dreams are as fateful that we should be well-advised to be afraid of them.

342. **Seint Kenelm**—Kenelm was made a saint after his murder at the age of seven years under the order of his aunt when he had succeeded his father Kelulph on the throne of the Mercians in 821. None of the legends which grew round his name contains an allusion to the cream. According to the version of his life which has been drawn upon here, Kenelm

had a vision which he communicated to his nurse... ......"It is said that there stood by his bed-side a stately trec, stretching to the very stars and beautiful with spreading branches which from top to bottom were covered with all sorts of flowers. In addition, it blazed with innumerable lamps. On the very summit of it, from which everything could be seen far and wide, he saw himself standing and three parts of the earth bending towards him with profoundest reverence. While he was lost in admiration of this magnificent spectacle, certain of his own kin rushed under the tree and hewed it down. If fell with a mighty fall. But he himself was turned at once into a little white bird, that with unrestricted flight hastened to penetrate the upper air."—Lounsbury.

Caxton's *Golden Legend* also contains this dream.

343. **Kenulphus**—Kelulph, father of Kenelm. **Sone**–sun.

344. **Mercentrike**—the kingdom of the Mercians, who were in occupation of the districts bordering on Wales and who held all Middle England for a time.

345. **Lite**—little.

346. **Moadre**—murder. **Avysioun**—dream. **Say**—saw.

347. **Norice**—nurse. **Expowned**—explained. **Every deel**—every detail.

348. **Bad**—bade. **For to kepe......traisoun**—to guard himself well against treason. **Kepe**—guard himself.

349. **Nas**—was.

350. **Litel.....of**—he attached little importance to.

351. **So.........herte**—He was too innocent to protect himself against wickedness or villainly.

352. **Levere**—rather. **Sherte**—shirt. **I hadde............ sherte**—I would rather hold it dearer than my shirt. Chaucer's Chanticleer was an accomplished cock with a beard and a shirt.

353. **Rad**—read. **Legende**—the story of the saint's life

was usually read out at the time of church service on a Saint's day.

354. **Dame**—madam. **Sey**—say. **Trewely**—truly.

355. **Macrobeus**—The reference is to the commentator of the vision (Dream) of Scipio Africanus Minor (d. 128 B. C.) which formed part of the sixth book of Cicero's lost treatise "*De Republica*". "Macrobius, Theodosius himself lived in the first half of the fifth century. Scipio fell into an unusually heavy sleep in which his grandfather appeared before him and leading him to the Milky Way, showed him that he would conquer Carthage. Macrobius begins the commentary with a classification of dreams and their degrees of significance, and it was this, with the philosophic and astronomical explanation, that attracted medieval readers. It had some influence in making the dream a favourite setting for medieval works *e. g.* Dante's *Divina Comedia*, the *Roman de la Rose* and *English Pearl*, the *Vision of the Piers Plowman* and many works of Chaucer" (K. S.). **Writ**—wrote. **Avisioun**—vision.

356. **Affrike**—Africa. **Cipioun**—Scipio who was on a visit to the African prince when he saw the vision.

357. **Affermeth**—affirms. **Seith**—says.

359. **Forther-moore**—moreover.

360. **Of Daniel**—concerning Daniel. See Daniel (Old Testament) *1.* 17, and the following chapters for his visions.

361. **If he...... vanitee**—if he considered dreams as vain things without any significance.

362. **Joseph**—see *Genesis* xl, xli in the Bible.

363. **I sey nat alle**—I do not mean to say that all dreams are without any significance.
Wher—whether (also in *l.* 4325).

364. **Falle**—befall.

365. **Looke of Egipte the king**—Here is a typical "example of Chaucer's habit of recalling an idea and then connecting it with the sentence by a reference rather than directly ; 'King Pharaoh—his baker and butler', whether did they not feel any result when they dreamt. It is almost as if he were pointing at figures with a stick."

366. **Bakere**—cook. **Butiller**—butler.

368. **Seken**—search. **Actes**—things done and so the record of them. **Sondry**—different. **Remes**—realms.

369. **May......thyng**—may read about many wonderful things told about dreams.

370. **Lo**—Look. **Cresus**—The reference is to Croesus, King of Lydia. It also occurs in the 'Monk's Tale' just before this tale. It is an indication that this Nun's Priest's Tale was not originally written after the Monk's Tale. Chaucer is certainly not happy in making the Nun's Priest make a reference to the very story which the Monk, his immediate predecessor as narrator of stories, had been interrupted at.

The knight had begged the Monk to desist from proceeding with his tale. "Good Sir ; no more of this." The knight had been telling the assembled guests about the misfortunes of the illustrious.

The dream of Croesus in the Monk's Tale is to the following effect : Croesus dreamed one night that he was on the top of a big tree where he was made wet by Jupiter and dried by Phoebus. When Croesus related this dream to his daughter, Fania, she said, "You will be captured by Cyrus and hanged on a cross, where the rain will moisten you and the sun will dry you." It was a fact that after his defeat by *Cyrus* at *Sardis*, Croesus's life was spared.

371. **Mette he nat**—did he not dream ?

372. **Signified**—foretold.

373. **Andromacha**—wife of Hector. Her parting with Hector before a battle is the most pathetic passage in Homer's *Iliad* (*Bk. VI*). But the dream referred to here is not mentioned in Homer. Chaucer's sources might have been any of the medieval romances : (1) the spurious Latin histories of Dares, the Phrygian (4th century A. D.) and Dictys of Crete ; (2) Guido de Columnis ; (3) Benoit de Sainte More. The first named was the authority for the history of the Trojan War which was very popular in the Middle Ages.

374. **Sholde lese**—was destined to lose. **Lyf**—life.

376. **Lorn**—lost.

377. **Bataille**—battle.

378. **Availle**—avail.

379. **Natheles**—nevertheless.

380. **Of**—by.

382. **Ny**—nearly. **I may nat dwelle**—Chanticleer must not neglect his daily duty of crowing very early in the morning.

384. **That......adversitee**—I shall fall a victim to some misfortune or calamity as a consequence of his dream.

386. **That.. .....stoor**—I consider laxatives as of no account.

387. **Venymes**—venoms. **Woot**—know. **Weel**—well.

388. **Diffye**—defy. **Deel**—much.

389. **Myrthe**—mirth. **Stynte**—stop.

392. **Se**—see. **Beautee**—beauty.

393. **Eyen**—eyes. **Scarlet-reed**—bright-red. **Ye .... eyen**—The scarlet circle round the eyes of Pertelote was brighter and Chanticleer considered this as a

point of beauty. In most of the other hens this red circle round the eyes was rather dull. "Pertelote, as the ideal hen, was no doubt a great layer and the pinkish skin on a hen's head goes bright scarlet when she is laying." (K. S.)

394. **Dyen**—die.

395. **Siker**—certainly. **In principio**—The opening words of Genesis and of St. John's Gospel meaning "In the beginning" with which the Gospel of St. John opens. The short name for its first fourteen verses was also the most popular gospel and was supposed to have extraordinary powers. The Friars used to recite them from house to house (Vide Prologue *l*. 254). Here Chanticleer refers to them as gospel truth. He has tacked on "In the beginning" to the saying. "Woman is man's confusion" in order to make it refer to Eve's share in the Fall of Man.

396. **Mulier......confusio**—'Woman is man's confusion.' A favourite form of medieval literature took shape in a series of questions and answers, some of which were instructive and some in the nature of riddles. This line is taken "from a fabulous conference between Hadrian and Secundus, the philosopher which is reported by Vincent of Beauvais. Here Chanticleer quotes this taking advantage of Pertelote's lack of knowledge of Latin to give it an opposite meaning. The Bible gives the model for the balancing of woman's qualities" (K. S.) (see ante).

397. **Sentence**—meaning. **Madame...is**—At first Chanticleer apparently meant to say, "As woman in the beginning is man's confusion, so is she his chief joy, and then treacherously pretended that the second half of the remark was a translation of the first."(P).

402. **Solas**—solace.

403. **Diffye**—defy. **Bothe......dreem**—the use of these synonyms together gives the emphasis of a double

sound, though the meaning is the same. *Cf. House of Fame ll.* 9-12. Perhaps this is a mere rhetorical flourish of the cock.

404. **Fly**—flew.

406. **Chuk**—chuckling of a *cock*.

407. **A corn lay**—a corn that lay.

408. **Real**—royal (Latin *regalem*). "Real is the early French form. *Roial* is a later borrowing from Parisian French" (K. S). **Aferd**—afraid

411. **Grym**—grim. **Leoun**—lion. **As......leoun**—Like a fierce looking lion. The medieval belief was that a cook by his superb bearing, could even overawe a lion. Note the mock-heroic note in the descriptions of the cock and the beauties of early morning described almost in characters.

412. **Rometh**—roams. **Doun**—down.

413. **Hym**—he. **Deigned**—pretended.

415. **Rennen**—ran. **Thanne**—then.

416. **Roial**—royal.

417. **Leve**—leave

418. **Aventure**—fate

419. **The monthe......bigan**—March 21st, the creation took place about the vernal equinox. Bede placed three of the six days of creation before that date *i.e.*, March 18th—the first day of the world. This is in accordance with Hebrew traditions, the Jewish date for the creation being the vernal equinox B. C. 3761.

420. **Highte**—called. **Marked**—made. **That......man**—Bede, an authoritative writer, who assumed that creation began on the 21st March, shows by questions and answers how they proved it. "It was in spring, because it is said the earth brought forth

grass ; it was equinox, because light was said to have divided equally from darkness"—Morley in "*English Writers*", March was considered as the first month of the year which started on the 25th of March.

422. **Syn March bigan**—Since the month of March (the month when God first made man) was complete and thirty-two days more had passed. *i. e.*, the 3rd of May, because the sun had passed the 21st degree of Taurus. As the sun entered Taurus on April 12th and moved at the rate of a degree a day, this brings us to May 3rd which is the first day. After 32 days had passed, not since March began but since March ended. Possibly Chaucer intended this expression 'Syn March bigan' to be understood as 'since March the beginner'.

Notice carefully that the mock-heroic note is sustained throughout from Line 406. It reaches its climax when the epic hero (Chanticleer) appropriately dates the grand event of the fulfilment of his dream (3rd of May) with his justification of his forebodings. It is on May 3rd that Chanticleer had his adventure on an "unlucky" day.

Notice also that May 3rd is the date when for some mysterious reason or other, (a) Palamon breaks his prison (*Knight's Tale*) ; (b) and Pandarus persuades Criseyde to listen to Troilus's suit (*Troilus and Cresseyde*).

How do we get May 3rd as the eventful date ? Paraphrasing *ll.* 419-422 we get, "When (1) 31 days of March were passed (complete), and 32 days in addition were passed also, then by adding (1) and (2) together and reckoning from the first of March, we get May 3rd.

423. **Pryde**—pride.

424. **Sevene**—seven.

425. **Caste**—cast. **Sonne**—sun.

426-427. The Zodiac is an imaginary circular belt of the heavens outside which the sun and moon and minor planets do not pass divided crosswise into twelve equal areas called "signs of the Zodiac" each *named after a Zodiacal constellation formerly but not now contained in it.* The sun's annual course is the middle of this band. Each of the 12 signs of the Zodiac was allotted a twelfth of the circular band, *i. e.* 30 degrees. As the number of degrees in a circle and the number of days in the year are approximately the same, 1 day is approximately 1 degree of the sun's course round the Zodiac and 1 month (30 days) is approximately the time the sun would spend in each sign of the Zodiac. The sun was reckoned to begin in the first sign. Aries on March 12th, which was then, owing to a miscalculation, supposed to be vernal equinox. Then 11 days of March plus 30 days for the 30 degrees of Aries, plus 21 days for the 21 degrees of Taurus traversed, bring us to May 2nd. One day more is accounted for by Chaucer's *somwhat moore,* and an allowance for the error in reckoning 1 degree as 1 day." (K. S.)

428. **Kynde** - natural instinct. **Noon**—no. **Loore**—learning.

429. **Pryme**—the time 6 to 9 A. M. On May 3rd, the sun would have risen just a little over 41 degrees by 9 A. M. (*i. e.* pryme). **Blisful**—cheerful. **Stevene**—voice.

431. **Fourty......oon**—Here the reference is to the daily course of the sun from horizon to horizon to give the hour of the day—a different reckoning from that already used in *l.* 422 which applies to the annual course of the sun through the signs of the Zodiac. Here it shows the hour on the sun attaining an altitude of 41 degrees by 9. A. M. (*i. e.* pryme). **Y-wis**—certainly.

432. **Worldes blis**—worldly joy.

433. **Herkneth**—listen. **Briddes**—birds. **Synge**—sing.

434. **Se**—see. **Fresshe**—fresh. **Floures**—flowers.

435. **Myn**—mine. **Revel**—revelry.

436. **Sydeynly hym fil a sorweful cas**—a sad mischance suddenly befell him.

437. **The latter ende of joy is wo** – the end of all earthly bless is sorrow. *Cf* Troilus **IV** *l.* 834 *ff.*

Endeth than love in wo ? Ye, or men lieth ;
And every worldly joye, as thinketh me :
The ende of blisse ay sorwe it occupieth—

also *Cf. Man of Law's Tale, ll.* 421-443.

O sodeyn wo, that ever art successour
To worldly blisse.
We occupieth the fyn of our gladnesse.

438. **Ago**—past.

439. **Rethor**—orator. **Koude**—cold. **Endite**—compose.

440. **Cronycle**—chronicle. **Sanfly**—safely.

441. **Sovereyn**—sovereign. **Notabilitee**—a thing of great importance or note. Something well worth noting.

439-441. Except for a humorous support to the truth of the fable, these lines seem unnecessary and even pointless. The argument is this—"A chronicle must put on record the fact that the ultimate end af all earthly joy is sorrow. The mishap which overtook Chanticleer is a proof of this. It is as true as a chronicle." (K. S.)

Tyrwhill thinks *rethor* (orator) referred to in *l.* 439, is Petrus Comestor in somewhat uncomplimentary terms. "But it would seem more in accord with Chaucer's method of banter that they should be a satirical allusion to the monkish habitof writing sententious marginal comments (referring to the words 'Petrus Comestor' written in the margin of the Ellesmere and Hengwart MSS of "*Nun's Priest's*

Tale". There may also be a sly reference to some of the 'tragedies' Chaucer had first put into the mouth of the monk". (P).

442. **Herkene**—listen.

443. **Al so trewe**—quite as true.

444. **The book of Launcelot de Lake**—The subject of a great French prose-work 'Lancelot, of the 13th century, later dealt with in English in the 14th century poem 'Le Morte Arthur' (not Malory's). In this, Lancelot, a knight of the Round Table is the lover of Guinevere, Queen of Arthur.

446. This shows how Chaucer reverts to the main topic, cutting short all digressions to the minimum. **Sentence**—tale. Chaucer uses the word in different meanings.

447. **Colfox**—a fox with a mixture of coal-black or black brown colour in its fur—a fox with black markings. Chanticleer's dream, says "tipped was his tayl and bothe his eeres with blak'. **Sly**—cunning. **Iniquitee**—evil-mindedness.

448. **Worned**—lived. **Yeres**—years.

449. **Heigh**—high. **Ymaginacioun**—imagination. Foreseen by the exalted imagination or predestined by God. **Forncast**—foreordained or predestined by the dreams of destiny of powers above.

The poet seems to have had a peculiar fascination for the question of God's foreknowledge and man's free will, as will be seen from the many references to it, sometimes in a serious vein (as in *Torilus and Cressida*) and sometimes in a light mood as here.

"It is clear that the poet is posted with the main trend of metaphysical discussion prevalent in the Middle Ages, although his treatment of it in places reaches almost the point of burlesque. Note that even the fox lying in wait under cover of cabbages

ready to pounce upon his victim seems to be predestined to do the work". (Lounsbury).

450. **The same nyght**—the night that Chanticleer dreamt.

Hegges—fences. **Brast**—burst through.

451. **Ther**—where.

452. **Wont**—used. **Repaire**—go.

453. **Wortes**—cabbages under cover of which he hides so as to cause the least noise in the act of pouncing upon the victim.

454. **Undren**—is the period between 9 A. M. and midday (mid-forenoon or mid-afternoon or the whole forenoon).

455. **Waitynge his tyme**—watching for his opportunity. **Falle**—jump upon.

456. **Doon**—do. **Thise**—these. **Homycides**—secret murderers. **Gladly**—usually, habitually.

457. **Liggen**—linger.

458. **Lurkynge**—lurking.

459. **Scariot**—Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Christ (Matt. XXVI, 14-15) for thirty pieces of silver. Subsequently, he repented, brought back the coins and hanged himself (Matt. XXVII. 3).

Genyloun—is the traitor who schemes for the defeat of the rear-guard at Roncesvalles and who is the betrayer of Roland in the Charlemagne romances. Roland was in command of the rear-guard, Genelon carried out a treacherous assault on the rear-guard of Charlemagne's army and slew Roland and his army. Charlemagne was summoned by Roland's horn but he was then too late in arriving in time to help Roland.

460. **Dissymulour**—pretender. **Greek Synoun**—He allowed himself to be captured by the Trojans to

whom he declared himself to be a deserter. He professed to the Trojans that the Wooden Horse was an offering to the Athens and if brought within the city, it would render it impregnable. In this way he was instrumental in bringing the Wooden Horse within the walls. He then at dead of night released the armed men who made themselves masters of the city.

461. **Outrely**—utterly. **Sorwe**—sorrow.

463. **Flaugh**—flew. **Fro**—from. **Bemes**—perches.

465. **Perilous**—surrounded by dangers.

466. **What......bee**—What is decreed by God is sure to happen. Notice the mock-heroic effect seen not only in the pseudo-serious treatment of the three principal characters but also in the pompous talk about the questions of God's foreknowledge and man's free will and references to Biblical and classical examples. All these are in humorous contrast with the pettiness of the incidents. The grave references on predestination and free will prefacing the account of the untoward fate that overtook the hero, cannot but have an irresistible comic effect on the whole poem.

467. **Clerkis**—scholars.

468. **Parfit**—perfect. **Witnesse...is**—any sound scholar will tell you.

469. **In scole**–in schools of philosophy at the universties. **Greet**—great. **Altercation**--difference of opinion.

470. **Mateere**—matter. **Disputisoun**—discussion.

471. **And......men**—and (in the past) there has been a lot of discussion by countless men.

472. **Bulte .....bren**—sitt or separate the flour from the bran thoroughly. **Ne kan nat**—cannot.

473. **Hooly doctour Augustyn**—The reference is to St. Augustine of Hippo (345-450). He was engaged in

constant theological controversy in which he emphasised the essential corruption of human nature through the Fall of Man and the consequent slavery of the human will. He also strongly maintained the doctrine of predestination. He is not to be confused with another St. Augustine (First Archbishop of Canterbury) who was sent by Pope Gregory to preach the Gospel in England.

474. **Boece**—Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, born at Rome between A. D. 470 and 475, was Consul in 510 and in favour with Theodoric the Great, King of the Goths. But incurring his suspicion of plotting against the Gothic rule, he was imprisoned and put to death in 525. While in prison, he wrote his celebrated work "*De Consolatione Philosophiae*" which was translated by King Alfred and by Chaucer under the title of "Boethius" and others. He discussed about the question of freedom of the will among other things in this book. Chaucer was much influenced by this book.

Bisshope Bradwardyn—Thomas Bradwardine was distinguised for his lectures delivered at Meston College, Oxford, which were expanded in the form of a huge book in Latin. This book became for ages a standard authority among theologians of the Middle Ages. In this book, he tries to prove with much logical force that human actions have no merit, that human nature cannot conquer a single temptation without divine grace that this grace is the gift of God whose knowledge and power are alike perfect and that God's foreknowledge is absolute.

475. **Goddes**—God's. **Forwityng**—warning.

476. **Streyneth**—constrains. **Nedely**—of necessity.

477. **Nedely........necessitee**—by 'constraint' is mean compulsion by necessity.

478. **Elles**—else. **Choys**—choice.

480. **Forwoot**—foreknows. **Er**—before.

481. **Neverea deel**—not at all.

482. **Condicioneel**—conditional.

475-482. Notice carefully the three different positions taken up by Chaucer regarding this question of God's foreknowledge and man's free will—

(a) God has foreknowledge of everything. He foreordains everything.

(b) God has foreknowledge lest He leaves free choice to do or not to do a thing.

(c) God foreknows but his foreknowledge involves conditional (not absolute) necessity, not simple necessity.

The position taken up by Boethius (in his "Consolations of Philosophy") is this: God foreknows everything but there is yet room for free will. This work was translated by Chaucer under the title of "Boethius". The obvious objection raised by Boethius is—that the one precludes the other, to which philosophy replies that the difficulty is due to the future of man to have a conception of the simplicity of God's nature. Two kinds of necessity are to be distinguished *viz., simple necessity e. g.* mortality of man and *conditional. necessity e. g.*, a man should take a walk. In the second, there is an element of free will ; and though God knows that the man *will* walk. His foreknowledge does not make it necessary that man should walk. This is a long and subtle argument which hardly removes doubt. It is set out in Chaucer 's translation of Boethius's work.

483-484. Notice how cleverly Chaucer avoids further digression and excursion into philosophy and reverts to the real business of telling the tale.

485. **With sorwe**—with disastrous results.

488. **Cold**—depressing *e. g.*, cold comfort.

Wommennes...colde—a proverb of Norse origin. It also occurs in the proverbs of Alfred in the form '*Cold red is queere red.*'

489. **Wo**—woe.

491. **Ther as**—where. **Ese**—comfort.

492. **But for.........displese**—'But I do not know whom I might displease'. It is quite probable that Chaucer was writing this in his own person. But notice also that this remark is also very suitable to the priest, attending on the Prioress, and as such, unable to indulge in the usual medieval abuse of women." (P).

494. **Game**—humour.

495. **Auctours**—authors.

497. **Thise..... myne**—The kind of apology to women for speaking in depreciation of the other sex is common enough in Chaucer who usually makes the excuse that he is merely reporting what somebody else has said against women and that it is all in fun. *Cf. Prologue*, 724 ff. *Roman de la Rose* 15159 ff.

498. **Divyne**—predict, suppose. **I kan.........divyne**. This line seems capable of two interpretaion *viz*., "I know no harm of divine women" (a humorous touch well in keeping with the poem) or "I can devine no harm of women" (equally sacrastic).

499. **Soond**—sand. **Hire**—herself. **Myrily**—merrily.

500. **Lith**—lies. **Hire**—her. **Sustres**—sisters.

501. **Agayn the sonne**—out there in the sunshine. **Agayn**—towards (in the sense that she was lying full in the rays of the sun).

502. **Soong**—sang. **Mermayde**—mermaid (woman of the sea with fish tail instead of legs) believed to be good at singing.

503. **Phisiologus**—a king of unnatural history of beasts,

birds and also precious stones, with accounts of their nature, properties together with a rather far-fetched moral and spritual meanings and interpretations. Originally, it was perhaps a Greek book of instruction in Alexandria early in the second century, subsequently translated into Latin and the principal European vernaculars *Cf.* Ramaunt of the Rose, 674-684. (the portion believed to have been translated by Chaucer). of course, Chaucer is laughing at the authority quoted by him ironically.

506 **Wortes**—cabbages. **Boterflye**—butterfly.
As he.........boterflye—This is a beautiful purple patch (description of nature) which rivals any of the touches of nature in the *Roman de Renart*. The picture presented here is that of Chanticleer's eyes being directed to the cabbages under which the Fox is hiding as he was attracted by the flutterings of a lovely butterfly.

507. **War**—aware. **That.. ......lowe**—that lay in a position low enough for concealment so as to be able to pounce upon his victim.

508. **No-thying ....hym**—it did not please him in the least. He did not think of crowing which was far from his thoughts.
Thanne—then. **For to crowe**—to crow

509. **Cride**—cried. **Sterte**—started.

511. **Natureelly**—instinctively, by natural instinct.

512. **Contrarie**—enemy.

516. **Gentil**—noble, of noble birth. *Cf. Gentilnesse*—graciousness (4486). **Wher......gon** ?—are you going away ?

517. **Be ye**—are you ?

518. **Feend**—friend.

51) . **Wolde**—intended, purposed. **Vileynye**—villainy.

520. **Tespye**—to espy. **Conseil**—secrets.

523. **Stevene**—voice.

525. **Therwith**—along with it.

526. **Boece**—Boethius (frequently referred to as 'Boece' in the Middle Ages) born at Rome between A. D. 470 and 475, was consul in 510 and enjoyed the favour of Theodoric the Great, but incurring the suspicion of plotting against the Gothic rule, was imprisoned and subsequently put to death in 525. While in prison, he wrote his celebrated work '*De Consolatione Philosophiae* which was translated by King Alfred, and by Chaucer under the title of 'Boethius' and others. In his philosophical work (fifth book) he discussed about predestination (God's appointment from eternity of those who shall be saved) and free will (power of choosing between courses real or imaginary). He also wrote manuals of arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and music, studied in the Middle Ages. His book '*Institatio Musica*' is referred to here.

529. **Han......ese**—He must have amused and entertained himself very agreeably with them. The Fox now proposes to serve the cock just as he had served his parents. Hence his '*greet ese*' and his readiness to entertain and amuse the cock in his den. **To........ese**—a veiled allusion to their fate.

530. **Fayn**—fun. **Plese**—entertain, amuse, just as he had done to his parents.

531. **For......syngyng**—but since singing has been mentioned. "A polite and not too pointed return to the subject he himself has started." (K. S.)

532. **Moote**—may. **Brouke**—enjoy. **Tweye**—two. **So moote......tweye**—So may I have as I am hoping to do, full use of my two eyes. "But here there is irony in the tag, for the Fox is going to persuade Chanticleer to use his eyes." (K. S.)

534. **Morwenynge**—morning time.

535. **Of herte**—with all his heart.

536. **To make......strong**–to raise the pitch of his voice.

537. **Wolde...._hym**—would exert himself.

538. **Wynke**—wink, look with half-shut eyes. This is the captor's trick of inducing his vtctim to close its eyes so as to make it all the easier to be seized upon.

540. **Smal**—slender.

544. **Red**—read. **Daun Burnel the Asse**—The hero of the *Speculum Stultorum* of Wirekor Nigel (a satire on monks)—an elegiac poem recounting the adventures of Burnel the Ass. The ass who wishes to acquire a larger tail, goes to Salerno and to Paris to study, meets with various adventures and finally loses his tail altogether. The satire is on the follies, vices, and corruptions of society in general then prevalent in all classes but is directed in particular against monks and religious orders under the guise of adventures of Burnel, the type of the disgruntled and discontented monk.

The story referred to here is that of Gundulfus, the priest's son who broke the leg of one of the chickens while chasing a hen and her famlly out of a granary. When he was to be ordained years afterwards and to receive a benefice, the chicken now grown into a cock refuses to crow with the result that Gundulfus overslept himself. When he arrived at the cathedral the ordination was over and Gundulfus lost his preferment.

546. **Preestes sone**—priest's son. **Yaf**—gave. **Knok**—knock.

547. **Whil......nyce**—while he (Gundulfus) was young and foolish. **Nyce**—foolish. He is the priest's son.

548. **Lese**—lose. **Benefice**—pariestly allowance.

551. **Of his subtiltee**—Note that as the text stands, the wisdom and discretion of Chanticleer's father are

compared to those shown in the device of the cock in refusing to crow on the day of ordination of Gundulfus, the priest's son. But both the metre and sense would improve slightly by omitting the 'of' (P). **Subtiltee**—ingenuity.

552. **For seinte charitee**—for Saint's mercy (an oath).

553. **Lat se—**show me, *lit.*—'let (one) see'. **Countrefete**—counterfeit, copy.

556. **Ravysshed—**ravished. **Flaterie**—flattery.

557. **Allas, ye lordes—**aside (spoken by an actor and supposed not to be heard by other actors) "by way of comment or mere rhetorical address by the story-teller, though there were no lords among the Canterbury pilgrims to profit by it." (K. S). **Flatour**—flatterer.

558. **Losengeour**—liar.

559. **Plesen**—please.

560. **Soothfastnesse—**truthfulness.

561. **Redeth**—read. **Ecclesiaste**—Solomon, the author of *Eccles* (*Ecclesiastes*—one of the books of the O.T., but now thought to be of a later date probably of the third century B. C.)

Read "*Ecclesiasticus advises*". It may refer to Proverbs, quoted on Chaucer's Tale of Melibeus in the section on flattery.

562. **Beth war—**be aware. **Hir—**their.

563. **Toos—**toes.

564. **Cloos**—close.

565. **For the nones—**for the occasion. Notice that Chanticleer carries out the suggestions of the Fox (4497-98) which are all well-thought out.

566. **Daun Russell**–a common name for a fox of reddish brown complexion. **Stirte—**started.

567. **Gargat**—throat. **Hente**—seized.

569. **Sewed**—saw.

570. **O Destinee**—Notice the mock-heroic tone from here to line 606—a literary parody of the heroic style, with highflown language and sentiments. **Eschewd**—evaded. **O Destinee.........eschewed**—O Destiny whose decrees may not be overruled.

573. **Fil**—befell. **Meschaunce**—mischance.

On a Friday......meschaunce—The third of May 1385 as well as in 1391 was a Friday. The latter year would be a very good date for this Tale on account of the style. But behind the introduction of the fact that the unfortunate accident that overtook the cock fell on a Friday. There lay at the back of Chaucer's mind the idea of indulging in some-mock-heroics. We must not think that Chaucer was writing with his eye on the calendar. (P)

574. **Venus**-was the Roman name of the goddess of beauty and love (identified with the Aphrodite of the Greeks). **Pleasunce**-pleasure.

575. **Syn**—since. **Syn...Chauntecleer**—since Chanticleer was singing merrily and was in the service of Venus, using the best his musical ability in that behalf. Note the mock-heroic tone of this remark.

577. **Moore......multiplye**—more for pleasure's sake than for multiplication of his kind, as cocks also sing before indulging in the act of procreation.

578. **Woltestow**—wouldst thou. **On the day**—on the day of Venus, the goddess Frig, the wife of Woden, was identified with Venus.

579. **O Gaufred, deere Maister soverayn**—The reference is to Geoffrey de Vinsauf, an Englishman, who wrote a book named *Nava Poetria* towards the end of the twelfth century. This was a manual for poets which contained precepts and rules of rhetoric, be-

sides instructions for composing in the different styles of poetry. In this work there is a passage in which the poet laments the death of Richard I who received his mortal wound from an arrow on Friday, March 26, 1199, though somehow lingered till his death on April, 6. Chaucer himself imbibed the stylistic manner of his 'dear master sovereign' whom he mocks and makes a sarcastic reference here in a spirit of burlesque and irony. Evidently, Chaucer had the keenest sense of the ridiculous.

582. **Ne hadde I**—had not I. **Sentence**—noble sentiments.

588. **Ylioun**—Ilium, the citadel of Troy.

589. **Pirrus**—Pyrrhus or Neoptolemus, was the son of Achilles, who was concealed in the wooden horse. He revenged his father's death by brutally killing old King Priam. His father was wounded in the heel (the only vulnerable part of his body) by Paris and died. The phrase "streite sword" suggests "drawn sword". Perhaps Chaucer was drawing upon some Latin original.

590. **Hent**—seized. **Berd**—beard.

591. **Eneydos**—*Aeneid* of Virgil (*ll.* 469-558) a poem in Latin recounting the adventure of Aeneas who escaped with his father Anchises, after the Trojan War.

592. **Maden**—maiden. **Clos**—enclosure.

593. **Seyn......sighte**—seen the sight of Chanticleer.

594. **Sovereynly**—royally. **Shrighte**—shrieked.

595. **Hasdrubales wyf**—reference is to Hasdrubal, the general of the Carthaginians, when the Romans burnt Carthage in 146 B. C., as Romans were convinced that Rome would never be safe until Carthage, a famous city of the ancient world, was destroyed. When death seemed imminent, Hasdrubal ran forth to the victor and pleaded for his life.

"But when his wife, who was on the roof of the burning Temple, saw him fall at the feet of Scipio, the conquering Roman hero, her proud heart swelled at the disgrace. With bitter words she bade her husband to be careful to give his life, she plunged first her sons and then herself into the flames." (Mommsen's History of Rome, iii, 40).

598. **She**—Hasdrubal's wife, not Pertelote.

602. **Nero brende the citee**—Nero, a Roman Emperor (A. D. 54—68), the last of the Julio-Claudian dynasty was proverbial for his tyranny and brutality. It is said that the burning of Rome in 64 was due to his order and that he fiddled while it burnt. *Cf.* Chaucer's *Mon kes Tale*, (3669-71)

"He Rome brende for his delicacye.
The senatours he slow upon a day,
To here how men wolde wepe and crye."

Nero found scapegoats among the Christians and slew the senators. *Cf.* Boethus II where Chaucer says of Nero : "He leet brende the citee of Rome and sleen the senatours".

605. **This......slayn**—the wives of the senators by their loud shrieks declared that it was Nero who was instrumental in killing their husbands and in bringing about indescribable misery.

606. **Now......agayn**—Evidently Chaucer is anxious to cut short the digression and proceed with his main job.

607. **Sely**—simple.

611. **Bar**—bore.

612. **Harrow**—a cry for help.

613. **Weylaway**—surround (waylay) on all sides.

614. **Staves**—sticks.

Many... ..man—many a men besides.

615. **Ran Colle, our dogge, and Talbot and Gerland**—All these names for dogs are personal names. *Colle* is a diminutive form of *Collie*. It is also applied to persons usually of low station. *Talbot* and *Gerland* are names of hounds.

616. **Malkyn**—diminutive form of *Matilda*, commonly used for a serving-maid. The distaff is usually used in fox-hunts.

618. **So .....dogges**—on account of the barking. **Fered**—afraid.

620. **They.........breek**—it appeared as if their hearts broke.

622. **Dokes**—ducks, **Quelle**—quell. **As men......quelle**—as if they were being killed.

624. **Have**—bee-hive. **Out........bees**—attracted by the noise.

625. **Hydous**—hideous, **A benedicitee**—(pronounced either *benecites* or *bendice*. 'O bless us', a very common exclamation.

626. **He Jakke Straw**—This construction is natural enough in conversation. It is also very common in Chaucer—Jack Straw was the leader of a party of insurgents from Essex in the Peasants' Rising of 1381. He seems to have struck the imagination of his followers more than his colleague, Wyat Tyler. They wanted freedom from oppressive laws, customs and taxes. They made a raid on London and the noise made by them was simply hideous. "The noise made by the followers of this rebel, to which our author alludes, he had probably heard himself (Tyrwhitt). **Meynee**—followers.

628. **Any Flemyng kille**— Edward III encouraged these foreigners (the Flemings) to settle in England merely with a view to improving the manufacture of

wool as they were expert craftsmen. Foreigh influx into trade or profession is always strongly resented. They were ruthlessly beheaded by the insurgents led by Wyat Tyler and Jack Straw.

630. **Bemes**—trumpets. **Box**—wood of the box-tree.

635. **Turneth**—suggested by the turning of the wheel of Fortune.

639. **If that......ye**—if I were you.

640. **Yet......seyn**—This is usually the captive's trick to compel the captor lose his hold. "In such stories, the captor holds the captive between his teeth, and loses his prey by opening his mouth for whatever purposes whether to wash it, or to sing, or speak (either in general or in saying grace, or finally in jeering at a party of pursuers).—Miss K. C. Peterson in "On the Sources of the Nonnes Prestes Tale" (Ginn & Co)

As...me—as sure (wys) as God may help me. **Wys**—certainly.

641. **Turneth agayn**—turn against. **Cherles**=churls.

642. **Averray.....falle**—a plague on you.

644. **Maugree youre heed**—in spite of your heed *i. e.*, all you can do.

648. **Delyverly**—quickly.

658. **Shrewe**—curse.

659. **Bothe......bones**—completely.

660. **Than ones**—even once.

662. **Do......synge**—cause me to sing.

664. **Thee**—prosper.

666. **Undiscreet of governaunce**—wanting in self-control.

667. **Jangeth**—talks. **Holde his pees**—keep quiet.

673. **Seint Paul sieth**—The reference is to *Romans* XV, 4 : "For Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning".

677. **My lord**-was the superior of the *Nonnes Preest i. e.*, William Courtenay, Archbishop of Canterbury 1381—1396. It was the convention with authors of medieval books to close with a prayer. Possibly, it is the echo of the end of one his sermons.

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APPENDIX A

University Questions and Answers

(*With special reference to Nun's Priest's Tale*)

Q. 1. Illustrate with special reference to Nun's Priest's Tale, Chaucer's (a) joy of living; (b) pictorial quality of his works ("Chaucer delights in bright colours"); (c) humour (How far satire enters into this tale? Discuss (d) skill in shrewd observation and delight in detail.

M. A. 1936).

Ans. (a) Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' illustrate his delightful interest in all specimens of humanity and his tolerance for their absurdities, follies and foibles. His works show that Chaucer was a man who in spite of many disillusions, was filled with the sense of joy and gladness at the very spectacle of life. Every object he saw in life, serious and comic, could move him with laughter. 'He had a gift of detached observation, which he exercised for the sheer joy it yielded him'. "For this is his secret : he loves and it is this that makes him so lovable as a poet". "Indeed what marks him out from his contemporaries is this freshness of outlook and his gladness in everything he sees in life, which was to him a field of perennial delight". His poetry is thus a genuine source of joy and strength, as it embodies a view of life which, in spite of its many contradictions, is sound, healthy and fresh. One cannot read him without feeling that it is good to be alive. He has a lightness of heart which is born of his pleasure in life and is revealed by his well-lit pictures which call

up spring, the month of May, flowers, birds and music. "There is honoarable and hilarious laughter resounding on all sides, when the story-tellers laugh at the stories and at each other, and the author himself laughs at them and at himself". "Though he holds the mirror up to the life of his time, the dark underside of it is nowhere reflected by him". "The characteristic tone of the Tales is that of frank pleasure in the good things of life. Chaucer's temperament thus explains his relations with his age. "His was a new and perennial comic vision which gathered into the service of his poetry his unique personal powers of observation, wit and humour... Chaucer's joy is the fountain of his comedy. Like Shakespeare's, it expresses itself in harmonies, forgivenesses, bounties, and tolerances. And thus it makes a happiness, which is an image of that final joy, an affirmation and a laughter, because all shall be well in his *comedy of gladness* of which he was a pioneer." Although pathos qualifies much of his finest writings, Chaucer's dominant practical mood is one of delight.

Tragedy was a favourite theme in the Middle Ages. It is significant that when the Monk reaches his seventeenth tragedy, the knight calls 'Hoo' and remarks that this king of accumulation of misfortune is very painful to him. Such tragic classical references are lamentably out of place for the merry occasion of a hilarious holiday outing. So the host of Tabard Inn insists on a merry tale in keeping with the gay and cheerful atmosphere of the pilgrimage. 'Yes host,' said Sir John, the Nun's Priest, 'riding or walking, blame me if I be not merry withal'. The poor widow kept a cock, called Chanticleer than whom there was not to be heard a merrier crow in the country round. When the sun rises fifteen degrees, then he (Chaunticleer) would crow so that

it was a joy to hear him. When the sun again climbs up in the sky 'forty degrees and one', he asks Madam Pertelote to look at the great joy that prevails in the world of nature. "Madam Pertelote", said Chanticleer, "my world's bliss, only hearken how those happy birds are singing, and see the fresh flowers, how they grow and all these things fill my heart, with such joy and comfort."

(b) It is a veritable picture-gallery of twenty-nine pilgrims that Chaucer has presented in his Tales, following the methods and technique of master painters. In almost all his pictures, Chaucer has shown his preference for bright colours. We cannot fail to be attached by the brilliant patches of colour conspicuous in some of his portraits which make them so realistic and lifelike. "Splashes of colour arrest the eye as we go from portrait to portrait —the embroidered gown of the squire, the green coat and hood of the Forester, the row of coral and green beads on the arm of the Prioress, the scarlet rose of the Wife of Bath, the Pardoner's hair as yellow as wax"—In all these touches, Chaucer "rivals the art of the painter".

The comb of Chanticleer is ruddier than the finest coral. His bill is black and shines like jet, his legs and toes are azure, his nails are whiter than the lily flower and his neck and back are of ruddy gold. In his dream, Chanticleer sees a beast like a hound whose colour is light tawny, between yellow and red, and both his ears and tail are spotted with black. Madam Pertelote's interpretation of her husband's dream is a feast of colour-effects. Says she, "This dream you have had tonight came from the overflowing of your red choler, liable to make people dream of arrows, and of fire with ruddy flames, of red beasts that try to bite them, of contentions and strifes, and great and small red

wasps ; as the humour of melancholy will cause a man to cry in his sleep for fear of black bulls and bears, and black devils ready to snap them up".

(c) For Chaucer's *Humour*, see under 7—8 *Introduction.*

With Chaucer, humour is the very soul and essence of an artist and his art. His humour is virtually his way of looking at life, a habit of mind and a comedic attitude to men and things arising out of his delightful interest in all specimens of humanity. Thus, it is that his *Tales* are a rich and almost inexhaustible fund of farce, wit, irony, humour and good-natured satire. "His is a catholic rather than a Puritan laughter. That is why his humour is not of the satirical kind, which hurts and destroys". The narrowness of moral purpose which more often than not accompanies the strokes of a satirist is quite foreign to his mind and art". His *Nun's Priest's Tale* is "not merely a fable of beasts but a grand strutting parody of entire humanity in the poultry-yard." The hero Chanticleer seems to be a burlesque of the typical medieval lord and the knight of almost epic dimensions. He observes almost clock-like punctuality in his crowing and displays the astronomical knowledge of the age beyond the reach of common humanity. He struts proudly as a 'prince' in a hall'. He is also the type of the romantic lover and also a bit of a poet gifted with a keen sensiblity for Nature's beauty. It is the underlying sense of humour that helps to transform a simple and familiar fable of beasts into the first great mock-heroic poem of English literature with the help of a kind of solemn gravity of the tone which lies at the centure of all great art. The Chanticleer is also a perfect gentleman—cultured, brave, noble, intelligent and God-fearing but his ......one failing—one flaw in his character *viz.*, his

vanity and susceptibility to flattery for which he temporarily suffers at the hands of Daun Russell. "In the Chaucerian conception of a gentleman there is always something god-like mixed with something utterly humble."

(d) It has been said that Chaucer has in many cases drawn his portraits from living models—actual persons he knew which accounts for his life-like portraits. "The description of each man's horse, furniture and array, reads like a page from a memoir", broad-based on the solid bed-rock of life. "It is known, of course, that there did exist that jolly good host, Harry Bailey of Southwark who kept an inn in 1598. There is also some evidence that actual persons among Chaucer's contemporaries might have formed the originals of the Reeve, the Man of Low, the Franklin and the shipman. But surely we cannot be dead certain about the existence of living models. He had ample opportunity of observing mankind in his capacity as valet, courtier, soldier, civil servant, tourist, supervisor. His wide experience enabled him to adapt his homely stories of everyday life to the exigencies of his art, illumined by shrewd observation of men and things with a passion for detail and tolerant humour and occasional moralising. His passion for detail is seen in his description of the physical characteristics of his men and women, their dress, food, taste, their humours and very manners. Indeed, Chaucer's chief claim to greatness consists in his discovery that 'to make the best of nature and not to grope vaguely after something better than nature, was the true office of art.' "We receive such an exact idea of the man he is describing that we can almost see them bodily before our eyes. The poet's intuition and powers of observation are as wonderful as the art by which he lets his characters grow gradually

before us" (Ten Brink). "In this way, every character emerges step by step, through a succession of concrete details which fall in the end into perspective and reveal the person with his typical traits cleverly combined with individual traits".

Q. 2. How does Chaucer's tale differ from the sources from which it is derived ? What light do these differences throw on Chaucer's treatment and temperament ? How far may this tale be described as original ? M. A. 1943 ; . 1939).

Ans. *See Introduction. Art. 7, The Sources and Chaucer's Treatment.*

Q. 3. "It is a characteristic of Chaucer that he continually pauses in dealing with the matter in hand to discuss some question of abstract nature." Consider their opinion with reference to the tale. M. A. 1936)
—Write a note on and justify Chaucer's digressions.

Ans. See *Introduction*, Art 7.

Q. 4. "It is not what he says but the way, he sees it ; not what he sees, but the way he sees it". Discuss the criticism of Chaucer's humour with reference to this tale.

Discuss the humour of the Nun's Priest's Tale.
(1953, 1957, 1959)

How far does satire enter into this tale if at all ? Illustrate the view that Chaucer's forte is irony and not satire. (1955)

Ans. See Introduction, Art. 7, *Humour.*

Q. 5. 'The *Nun's Priest's Tale* has been claimed as the master-piece of Chaucer's tales'. What prominent qualities does it seem to you to possess ?

Ans. See Introduction, Art. 7, *Appreciation of the Poem.*

Q. 6. "The *Nun's Priest's Tale* is the greatest parody in English literature. In this tale, Chaucer shows the

keenest sense of the ludicrous, the incongruous and the comical in life." Elucidate. (. M. A. 1937)

Discuss the Element of Comedy on this Tale. (1953)

Ans. See Introduction, Art. 7, *The N. P. Tale as a mock-heroic poem.*

Q. 7. Show from this tale the variety of Chaucer's reading. Write an account of Chaucer's "library".

Ans. See Introduction, Art. 7.

Q. 8. Illustrate Chaucer's employment of the realistic art. (. M. A. 1958)

Ans. See Introduction ; Art. 8 under Detailed Study of Chaucer.

Q. 9. Write a character study of Chanticleer and Pertelote and contrast their mental characteristics.
Ilustrate the "dignity" of the characters. (. M. A. 1949)

Ans. See Introduction, Art. 7.

Q. 10. Give examples from the poem of the various kinds of the *e*. in Chaucerian English.

Ans. See Appendix B.

Q. 11. What idea of contemporary life can be derived from the tale ?

Ans. See introduction, Arts. 5, 6 and 7.

Q. 12. Refer to their context the following and add any necessary explanations and comments :—

(1) I kan noon harme of no womman divine.

(2) But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighte,
Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
Whan that her housbonde hadde lost his lyf.

(3 Redeth Ecclesiaste of flaterye,
Beth wer, ye lordes, of hir trecherye.

(4) O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn,
That, when thy worthy Kyng Richard was slayen,

With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore,
Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy loore,
The Friday for to chide, as diden ye ?
(5) This man out of his sleepe for feere abrayde,
But when that he was wakened of his sleepe,
He turned him and took of this no keepe.
(6) By nature he knew eche ascencion;
Of the equinoxial in thilke town.
(7) But sith I see that thou wolt heere abyde,
And thus forslewthen wilfuly thy tyde,
God woot it reweth me, and have good day.
(8) But I ne kan not bulte it to the bren,
As kan the hooly doctour Bradwardyn.
(9) Certes he Jakke Straw and his meynee,
Ne made never shoutes half so shrille,
Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille
(10) Swevenes engendren of repleccionns,
And ofte of fume and of compleccionns.
(11) O newe Scariote, newe Genyloun,
False dissymulour, O Greek Synoun,
That broughtest Troye al outrely to sorwe,
(12) On a Friday fil al this meschaunce.
(13) Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
And Malkyn, with a dysraf in hir hand.
(14) Withouten gift,—this Nero hath hem slayn.
(15) Lo, Catoun, which that was so wys a man,
Seyde he nat thus : 'Ne do no fors of dremes'.

Ans. See Paraphrase and Notes.

Q. 13. Put into Modern English Prose the following passages : Lines 4018. 29 : 4061-71; 4082-91 : 4107-15 ; 4174-85 ; 4222-4030 ; 4240-52 : 4284-94 ; 4405-4413 ; 4424-4435 ; 4515-4520 ; 4626-36.

Q. 14. Summarise the discussion on dreams between Chanticleer and Pertelote. What are the two views of the origin of dreams which they represent ?
(M. A. 1950)

Ans. See Paraphrase.

Most of medieval poetry began as allegories by way of dreams. Allegory was the dominant habit of poetic thought in the Middle Ages. Four of Chaucer's poems took this road into the imaginative world. Dreams were so to say, perpetual matter for Chaucer's later poetry ; dreams feigned, so as to start a poem : allegorical dreams, such as Criseyde had, to show the state of her feelings : dreams that come of indigestion (this is the interpretation put upon Chanticleer's dream by Pertelote), and prophetic dreams that seem to involve a theory of predestination ; all these dreams recur in Chaucer's poetry again and again. "Poetry, psychology, medicine and theology had so much to say of them, and these were sciences in which Chaucer was well versed." (Coghill). In his *House of Fame*, Chaucer enters upon a poetic dream of his own after marvelling at its inscrutable nature suggesting many kinds and cause. What Pertelote and Chanticleer were to say of these dreams in later years was this first adumbrated in the *House of Fame*. The 'colour' of a man's 'humour' (*e g.* red or black) is reflected in the images that afflict Chanticleer's dreams (*e. g.* red dogs, black devils). "Whether or not our wills are free was a question never far from Chaucer's mind after he had read Boethius. It is linked not only with the fiction of the goddess Fortune but also with his interest in dreams. Dreams were not fiction. Too many dreams of a prophetic nature had been recorded to dismiss the nation that a fatal future can sometimes be foreseen in them. And if the future can at all be foreseen, where is our free will ? "Dreams, matrimony and predestination are three of the great Chaucerian themes, and here, in this Aesopian fable, they reappear in a new variation, with learning in their train, both philosophical, medical and literary. The

learned bird of science, seen in the *House of Fame*, no longer an eagle, but now a hen, has an uptodate knowledge of laxatives. The 'Wormes' that Pertelote prescribes to the ailling Chanticleer are not simply a remedy to fit a fowl, but the actual medicine recommended by Dioscorides for the human ailment of a tertian ague from which, she claims, he is suffering. Chaucer' jokes often grow richer as one looks at them. Very few have died." (Coghill). In the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, this question of dreams is taken up along with the problem of free will and determinism. Ot the two opinions about the origin of dreams (*viz.*, those caused by the state of the body and those that foretell the shape and form of future events) Chauce puts in the mouth of Dame Pertelote the former because she is painted as a plain, prosaic creature with a common-sense view of men and things with her mind fixed on material things. The latter view is put into the mouth of Chanticleer, who is of a more romantic disposition and is meant as a foil to his wife.

Q. 15. Trace briefly the social and political tendencies of the time in which Chaucer lived. (M. A. 1952)

Write a brief essay on the age of Chaucer.

(M. A. 1958)

Show that Chaucer was as much a representative of his age as Pope was of his. (M. A. 1960)

Ans. See Introduction, The Age of Chaucer, Art. I.

APPENDIX B

Chaucer's Prosody and Grammar

Chaucer's employment of the ten-syllable line in the seven-line stanza for narrative poetry was his own discovery. Before his time, the dicasyllabic line and the seven-line stanza were old measures restricted to lyric poetry. The technical originality of Chaucer was, first, that he learned the secret of the ten-syllabic line and, later, that he used it for regular narrative and made it the proper "Heroic verse" (as Dryden called it) in English.

Chaucer thus represented the first landmark in English prosody and as a metrist alone, he may justly be claimed as the father of English poetry. Much of his composition is in one of the three stanzas—the octosyllabic couplet, characteristic of the period, the seven-line stanza or the Rime Royal belonging to the Italian period and the "heroic couplet" in which is written his maturest work. He made the heroic couplet the standard measure of narrative poetry, as Shakespeare made blank verse the standard measure of drama. He found English metres halting and stiff, he left them formal, graceful and supple.

The normal line of the Nun's Priest's Tale consists of five feet of two syllables each, stress falling on the second of the pair. Each verse has a caesura, which corresponds with the sense pause and is usually to be found after the second foot *e. g.*, line 62.

× / × / × / × / × /

She foond / herself / and eek / her dogh / tren two

is normal and it is regularly accented with the pause in the usual position.

There are many lines showing departure from the normal *e. g.*, line 78.

/ × × / × / × / × /

Milk and broun breed in which she foond no lak

Notice that in this line the stress in the first foot is reversed and falls on the first instead of the second syllable,

It is also common to find an extra unstressed syllable added at the end of a line *e. g.*, line 82.

× / × / × / × / ×

With stik / kes and / a dry / e dych / without ?

Another from of variety is introduced in lines, where there is a syllable less than the normal ten *e. g.* line 650.

× / × / / × / × /

And when / the fox / saugh / that he / was ygon

Where a syllable has been dropped out after the pause.

The final *e* of words is a most important factor in Chaucer's versification. The student should notice that the final—*e* is always to be sounded unless elided in certain cases in which it is followed by a vowel or by a word of French origin beginning with *h*. The student should do well to satisfy himself as to the origin of every *e* he comes across.

(a) The *e* is probably an inflexional form, or what is left or one and is met with in Nouns, Verbs, and Adjectives indicated below :

I. Nouns An oblique case of a noun monosyllabic is the nominative frequently ends in e :
feere 623 OE foer (noun)
soule (ace) 527 OE sawol (nom)

II. Verbs (1) Infinitives, whether preceded by *to* or otherwise ; make 151, lette 321, brouke 584.

(2) Past participles of strong verbs Yronne (425)

(3) Past tenses of weak verbs shente 74, seyde 121, 262. answerde 261.

(4) Present Indicatives. (a) 1st person singular gabbe 298, I sette 322, I telle 57. (b) Plural. *They roonne* 620.

(5) Present subjunctives : God helpe me, 640.

(6) Imperative singular : *ware* 188, *truste* 226.

III Adjectives—

(1) Plurals or an oblique case of a mono-syllabic adjective : *rede* 162. black 167 ; olde 206 ; goode 634.

(2) All forms used after *the* or a possessive adjective or the interjection 01.

(b) Where the-e is not inflexional it may represent—

i. A —e in old English.

ii. A —e in old French.

iii. The —e of the termination of an old English Adverb.

APPENDIX C

[Glossary and Chaucerian Grammar fully illustrated]

A

abhomynable adj. abominable, unnatural
a-bove adv. above, upwards
a-brayde p.t. woke with a start
a-byde v. wait, abide
accordant adj. agreeable
accord n. harmony
actes n. pl. histories
a-ferd pp. adj. afraid, frighntened
afferme v. maintain the truth of
aflrayed pp. frightened
a-fright pp. adj. afraid
after prep. and adv. for, according to, afterwards.
agaste vb. terrify
agayn prep. exposed to, towards, adv. back.
agayn turne return
ago agon pp. gone
agrief adv. in grief, unkindly
agu sub. ague
al adv. quite, just altogether
also adv. as
altercacioun n. dispute, strife wordly
amended pp. improved upon, amended
alwey adv. always
anhanged pp. hanged
anon adv. immediately
apothecarie sub. (n) apothecary
anoye v. weary
appoplexie sub. (n) apoplexy, effusion of blood in the head
areest sub. stop, custody
arrayed pp. make ready, arranged
arresten vb. to stop
arwes sub. arrows
arys verb, arise
as prep. like
as for -for
as in -in
as of -in
ascencioun sub. ascension
asure sub. sky-blue
atones adv. at once
attamed pp. broached, begun
alle at the
attempree adj. temperate
anctorite sub authority
auctors, auetoors sub. authors
aungel sub. angel
availle vb. avail, prevail
avauntour sub. boaster
aventure sub. fate, lot, chance

avisioun, avysioun sub. vision, dream
avoy interjection, oh ! alas !
await sub. ambush

B

bad pret
bade commanded
bak sub. back
bane sub. death, destruction
bar pret. bore
bataille sub. battle, fight
batailled pp. as adj. embattled
be, bee, been inf. to be
beer sub. bears
beest sub. beast, animal
bemes sub. beams; roost, perch
bemes sub. trumpets
bene sub. bean
berd sub. beard
benefice sub. benefit.
beres sub. bears
berkynge sub. barking
beryis sub. berries
bete verb, to flap, beat
betawixe prep. between
bifel pret. chanced, befell
biforn adv. before, previously
bigyle v. deceive
biknowe verb. confessed, acknowledged
bisyde prep. near, beside
bitwixe prep. between
biwreye v. reveal
blak adj. black
blisful adj. joyful
blisse adj. cheerful
blithe adj cheerful, merry
boles sub. bulls
bon, boon sub. bone
bord sub. table
boterflye sub. butterfly
betowe sub. þottom
bour sub. chamber
box sub. boxwood
brast vb. prep. burst
breed sub. bread
breek vb. break
bren sub. bran
brend vb. burned
briddes sub. birds
broughte vb. prep. brought
browke vb. to enjoy
bulbe vb. sift
by adv. near
byle sub. bill
bynethe adv. beneath
butiller sub. butler

C

cas sub. case, incident
caste vb. pret. threw
casuelly adv. by chance
catel sub. chattels, property
centaure sub. the herb centaury
certeyn adj. and adv. certain
certes adv. certainly
chaf sub. chaff

chapitre sub. chapter
cherle sub. countryman, peasant
chide vb. chide
choys sub. choice
clepe vb. to cry, call
clerkis vb. learned men
chomben pp. risen, ascended
clos sub. enclosure
cloos adj. closed
cokkes sub. cock's
colde adj. cold
colera sub. choler, humour
compaignable adj. sociable
comparisoun sub. comparison
compleccioun sub. constitution of the body, temperament
compleynedst vb. mournedst
condicionell adj. conditional
congregacioun sub. assembly, number
conseille vb. to advise
contekes sub. contests
comen vb. pret. came
corage sub. spirit
corn sub. a grain
countrefete vb. to imitate
cours sub. course
crew vb. to crow
cronycle sub. chronicle
crye vb. to cry
curteys adj. courteous

D

damoysele sub. damsel
dar vb. dare
daun sub. lord
dawenynge sub. dawn
debonaire adj. kind. gracious
dede deed adj. dead
dede sub. deed
deel sub. portion, share
deere adj. voc. dear, beloved
deigned verb, pret. it pleased
delit sub, pleasure
delyverly adj. actively. quickly
departen ; vb. inf. to part
develes sub. pl. devils.
devyse vb. inf. to narrate
deye sub. a female servant
deye, dye, dyen verb, to die
deyntee adj. dainty
diete sub. diet, food
diffye vb. to defy
digestyves sub. digestion
discrecioun sub. discretion
disputisoun sub. argument
dissymulour sub. dissembler
divyne vb. to guess, suspect
do vb. do, cause
dide exerted
doctour sub. teacher, learned men

doctrine sub. instruction
doghtren, doghtres sub. pl. daughters
dokes sub. pl. ducks
donge sub. dung
donge vb. to manure
dores sub. pl. doors
douteless adv. doubtless
drecched pp. tormented
drede vb. to fear, to be feared
dred sub. fear
dreynte : pp. drowned
dweile vb. linger
dych sub. ditch
dystaf sub. distaff

E

ech, eche adj. each
eek, eke adv. also
eeris sub. ears
effect sub. effect
ellebor sub. hellebore (a plant supposed to be remedy for madness)
elles adv. otherwise, else
endite verb, write, compose
enduren vb. experience, endure
engendren vb. arise, originate
engeindren verb, arise
engyned verb. tormented, tortured
ensamples sub. examples
entente sub. intention aim
equynoxial sub. equinox
er adv. before
erst adv. before
eschewed pp. avoided
ese sub. ease, comfort
espyen vb. to see, observe spy upon
ete vb. to eat
everichon pron. everyone
evermo apv. evermore
expowned vb. expounded
ey sub. egg
eyen sub. eyes
eyleth vb. afflicts, ails

F

fader sub. father, father's
faire adv. fairly
falle vb. to happen
faren pp. gone
faste adv. firmly
fayn adv. gladly
feelynge sub. taste, feeling
feend sub. fiend
feere sub. fear
feith sub. faith, honour
felawes sub. companions
felonye sub. villainy
fer adj. and adv. far
fered pp. as adj. afraid
fevere sub. fever
flatour sub. flatterer
flee vb. to fly
folye sub. foolish thing
for prep. and conj. because, since, against
forto in order to
for that because
forncast pp. forecast, preordained

fors sub. heet
forslewthen vb. to waste in idleness.
forthermoor adv. moreover
forwityng sub. foreknowledge
forwoot vb. foreknows
foule adj. disgraceful, foul, in poor condition
free adj. free, generous, noble
frend sub. friend
fro prep. from
ful abv. and adj. much, full, very
fumetere sub. the plant fumitory
fun adj. fine, pure
fynde verb, pret, to find
fyr sub. fire

G

gabbe vb. boast, lie
game sub. sport, pleasure
gan vb. prep. began
gurgat sub, the throat
gees sub. geese
gentillesse sub. nobleness, courtesy
gilt sub. sin
glade vb. to make glad
go gon vb. to go, walk
goute sub. gout
governaunce sub. management, control
graunt adj. great
greet adj. great
greve sub. grove
grone, gronen vb. to groan
grote sub. groat
grym adj. fierce.

H

halle sub. hall
han vb. to have
happed vb. happened
hardy adj. bold, daring
harrow interjec. a cry of distress
haven sub. harbour, day
heed sub. head
heeld vb. pret. hold
heere adv. here
heeris sub. hairs
hegges sub. hedges
heigh adj. high
heighe, hye adv. high
hele sub. health
heled pp. concealed
hem pro. pl. dat. and acc. them
hennes sub. hens
henten vb. to seize
herbergage sub. lodgings
herbe-yve sub. buck's horn, plantain
here vb. to hear
herkne vb. to here
herte sub. heart
herteless adj. as sub. coward
hevene n. heavens. sky
hewe sub. colour
hewed pp. as adj. coloured
hir, hire, pr. gen. pl. pers their

hir, hire pr. acc. dat. gen. sing 3 pars fem. her, hers
hirselven pre. reflex. acc. sing herself
hogges sub. pigs
holden vb. esteem, reckon, held
homycides sub. murderers
hoold sub custody
hooly adj innocent
hoote adj. hot
hostelrie sub. hotel
hostiler sub. landlord
hoten vb. command, promise
housbonde sub. husband
housbondrie sub economy
howped vb. cried out
hyder adv. hither
hydous adj. horrible
hym pro. acc. and dat. sing. 3 pers. mase. him

I

in sub. inn

J

jade sub. a sorry nag
jangleth vb. chatters, babbles
japes sub. jests, mocks, idle tales
jeet sub. jet
jolif adj. gay, cheerful

K

kan vb. can. am, able
katapuce sub. garden spurge, a purgative plant
keppe sub. heed
kepe vb. to heed, guard, take care of
knok sub. a blow
kyn sub. cows
kyn sub. race, lineage
kynde sub. instinct, nature

L

ladde vb. pret. led
large adj. beautiful
lat. vb. imp. allow, let
latter adj. comp. later
lawriol sub. laurel
leere v. to learn
legges sub. legs
lemes sub. flames
lene adj. lean
lenger adv. comp. longer
leoun sub. lion
lese v. to lose
leste v. imp. it pleased
lette v. to hinder, delay
leve sub. leave
levere adv. comp. rather
leye v. to lay, wager
lief adj as sub. dear one, darling
liggen v. to lie
lite adv, little
litel adj. little
lith sub. limb
logge sub. lodge, lodgings
loken pp. locked, fast
lond sub. land, country
looke vb. observe, take care, note
loore sub. instruction, advice
lossengeour sub. flatterer

losten vb. pret lost
londe adv. loudly
lust sub. pleasure, deserve
lye vb. to lie
lyf sub. life
lyk adj. like
lylye sub. lily
lyte adj. little

M

maad vb. pret. made
maister sub. master
maistow mayest thou
malencolye sub. melancholy
man fron. one
maner sub. kind, sort
mateere sub. subject
maugree prep. in spite of
may sub. many, can
male sub. confusion, confused, fancy
me pro. acc. and dat. me
meel sub. meal
mente pret. meant, intended
mermayde sub. mermaid
mervaille sub. wonder
mery, **murie** **myrie** adj. and adv. merry. cheering. wholesome, pleasantly
meschaunce sub. misfortune, accident
meese adj. mass
met, **mette** vb. pp. and pret. dreamed
meynee sub. following, followers
moost adv. mostly
moote vb. may, must, pret.
moste had to
moralite sub. moral lesson
moadre sub. murder
mordrour sub. murderer
morwe sub. morning. day
morwenynge sub. morning
murie murier, **myrie** see mery
myschaunce see meschance

N

namo, **namore** no more, nor
napoplexie apoplexy
narwe adj. narrow, small
nat not
natheless adv. nevertheless
nature sub. instinct, nature
nayles sub. claws, nails
ne neg part. not
neded vb. impera. needed, was necessary
nedely adv. necessarily, of necessity
nedes sub. gen. of necessity, needs
nekke sub. neck
newe adj. and adv. new, recent, recently
noght neg. adv. not
nones sub. nonce, occasion
noon adj. none, no
norice sub. nurse
notabilitee sub. a noteworthy thing
nothyng adv. in no respect
noys sub. noise
ny prep. near, nigh

nyce adj. foolish, weak
nygard sub. niggard
nys ne is, is not

O

o un adj. one
of prep. concerning from, out of, for by, in
ofter adv. comp. oftener
on prep. concerning, in the case of
ones adv. once
oon adj. nun, one
oonly adv. only
oother adj. and pron. other. second
orgon sub. organ
oriogge sub. clock
outrely adv. utterly
owene adj. own
owles sub. owls

P

paramours sub. lovers, mistresses
pardee interj. by God
parfit adj. perfect
passe vb. pass, surpass
pasture sub. pasture
peer sub. equal, peer
pees sub. peace
pekke vb. to pick
perilous adj. dangerous. ill-omened
peyne vb. reflex, to take pains, exert
pitous adj, compassionate
plesaunce sub. will, pleasure
plesen vb. to please
pleye vb. to play, jest
pleyne vb. bewail, complain
point sub. point, detail
poure adj. poor
poynant adj. piquant, pungent
powped vb. pret. blew, puffed
preeste sub. priest
preeve sub. proof
prively adv. secretly
propretee sub. property, quality
prow sub. advantage, profit
pryme sub. 9 A. M.
pynd pp. tormented, tortured

Q

quelle vb. to kill
quod vb. pret. said

R

rod see rede
ravysshed pp. delighted, ravished
reche vb. explain
recheless adj. careless, reckless
rede vb. to read
reed, rude adj. red
rekke vb. care, mind
remenant sub. remnant, remainder
remes sub. realms
rennen vb. to run
rente sub. revenue, income
repaire vb. to repai
repleccioun sub. excess

replect adj. full
resonable adj. reasonable
rethor sub. orator, rhetorician
reulen vb. govern
revel sub. joy
revers adj. reverse, contrary
reweth vb. fills with pity
right adv. just, exactly, precisely
roial, real adj. kingly, royal
romed vb. roamed, walked
roore vb. to roar, shout, bellow
ryde vb. ride

S

sanfly adv. safely
scole sub. university
se vb. to see
secree adj. secret
seculer sub. layman
see sub. sea
seinte adj. holy
seken vb. to search, examine
sely adj. simple, innocent, blessed
sentence sub. meaning, opinion, matter, narrative, judgment, sense
sewed vb. pret. followed, pursued
seye, sayn vb. to say
seyled vb. pret. sailed
seynd pp. as adj. roasted toasted
shaltow shalt thou
shente vb. pret. confounded, harmed
shirte sub shirt
shoon vb. pret. shone
shot sub. a missile
shrewe vb. to curse
shrighte vb. pret. shrieked
shul vb. shall, must, ought
significaciouns sub. signs
sik adj. sick
siker adj. sure, certain
sikerly adv. truly
sire sub. lord, master
sith adv. and conj. since
sklendre adj. slender
slawe, slyn pp. of sleen; slain
sly adj. sly, cunning
smal adj. thin, small
snowte sub. snout, muzzle
sodeynly adv. suddenly
solas sub. pleasure, comfort
somdel adv. somewhat
sond sub. sand, dust
sondry adj. separate, various
sone sub. sun
sonne sub. sun
soore adv. sorely
sooth sub. truth
soothfastnesse sub. truth
soothly adv. truly
sooty adj. sooty
sorwe sub. sorrow
soverayn adj. chief, principal, supreme

sovereynly adv. chiefly, above all
sowes sub. sows
speche sub. speech
speke vb. to speak
stape pp. as adj. advanced
stedefast adj. resolute determind
sterte, stirte, starten pret. to start, leap
stevene sub. voice
stikkes sub. stakes
stonden vb. to stand
stoor sub. provision, value
strecche vb. to stretch
streit adj. narrow, limited, scant
streyneth vb. compels, constrains
stynte vb. to stop, end
subtiltee sub. cleverness, cunning
superfluitee sub. excess
sustres sub. sisters
swerd sub. sword
swevene sub. pl. dream
swich adj. and pr. such a such
syde sub. border, edge
syn prep. and conj. since
syngen vb. to sing

T

taak vb. imperat. take
tale sub. take heed, value
tarie vb. to delay
techan vb. to teach direct
telle vb. reckon
tercione adj. tertian
tertian fever (*i. e.* ne recurring every three days)
thanne adv. then
thee vb. to prosper
then conj. than
ther adv. where, there
therwithal adv. in addition, moreover
thilke adj. the same
thinken vb. imper. to seem appear
thise pr. these
tho demons pro. those
thogh conj. though, although
thre hun. apj. three
thridde num. adj. third
thrity num. adj. thirty
throte sub. throat
thurgh prep. through
thurgh-out prep. through out
thyn pro. thine
thynges sub. business, affairs
tip-toon sub. tip-toes
to prep. to adv. too
tomorwe adv. tomorrow
tool sub. weapon, tool
toon toes, sub. toes
torment sub. suffering, pain
torne vb. to turn
traysoun sub. treason

trechery sub. treachery, deceit
trespas sub. transgression, wrong
trewe adj true
trewe adv. truly
tribulaciouns sub sorrows. tribulations
truste vb. trust, be sure
tweye adj. nun
twies num. adv. twice
tyde sub. time, hour

U

understonde pp. understood
undertake vb. avev. undertake to say
indiscreet adj. indiscreet, wanting
undran sub. morning, noon
up prep. upon

V

vanitee sub. emptiness, delusion
venymes sub. poisons, venoms
verray adj. true, very
vers sub. verses, poetry
viage sub. journey voyage
vileynye sub. wrong, wickedness
voys sub. voice.

W

war adj. aware, conscious
ware vb. imp. beware
warnynge sub. warning, premonition
wel adv. quite, even
wende vb. to go
were, weren vb. pret. was, were
werken vb. to work, cause
weylawey interj. alas ! well-away
whañ adv. when
what that pron. that which
wheer as adv. where, conj. whether
which that pron. who
whilom adv. formerly, once
whit adj. white
wight sub. person
wIkke adj. wicked
wise sub. manner, fashion
withoute, withouten adv. and prep. without
wityng sub. foreknowledge
whatsom adj. loathsome
wo sub. woe, sorrow
wode sub. wood
wol vb. will, wish
wollastow wilt thou
wonder adj. and adv. wondrously, wondrous
wonne pp. of winnen, won
wonned pp. of wone, dwelt
wont pp. as adj. accustomed
wook vb. pret. awoke
woot vb. knows
wortes sub. plants
worthy adj. distinguished, excellent
wydwe sub. widow
wyf sub. wife
wyn sub. wine

wynke vb. to wink, to close the eycs
wys adj. wise, adv. certainly

Y

ybeen pp. of be, to be
ydoon pp. of don, to do
ye sub. eye
yeerd, yerd sub. yard, enclosure
yelow adj. yellow
yeres sub. years
yeve verb, give
yfounde pp. found
ygon pp. gone
ylogged pp. lodged
ynough adv. enough
yollenden vb. pret. to yell, shout
you pr. acc. dat. you, yourself
yronne pp. ran
yseyled pp. sailed
ywarned pp. warned
ywis adv. certainly
ywrite pp. written

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رهينة

رهيبة

الجوفاء

عطوفة

رهيزا

رباح

① Barabas is
an overreacher
bcz he wants to
cross all the
limits for wealth
① Faustus is over
Reach